MAKEN NO DAYDREAMER
魔剣のデイドリーマー
3
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Maken no Daydreamer

Volume 3 - Crimson Forest and The Black Owl

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Chapter 23 - Rank and Call

One morning.

In the vacant lands outside of Volka City.

「Yes, I'm beat」

「Au!?」

Holding a dagger (for training), making sharp turns Elk jumped at me, I attacked her incoming leg……that's what I thought, but Elk skillfully dodged it.

However, due to the trajectory before her jumping my elbow accidently came cutting right in, hit the solar plexus, and Elk crashed down.

「That's why during the evasion of an attack any careless jumping is prohibited. Especially if the opponent is agile and has great maneuvering ability. You have start your next action the moment you land on surface. While the time you're in air, basically unless you use floating magic, you can't evade attacks」

「That is……Keho(*cough)! I do know that, but my body moved on it's own」

「Well, there's no choice other than letting your body learn it over time. Let's be patient」

「I see……Once again!」

Well, roughly it's like this.

This is the daily routine of us both recently.

We wake up early in morning, wash our faces, get dressed, come to this vacant land, complete the warming-up exercises and then do sparring as called we called it, morning training.

Even though I say that, this is training for『Elk』only, it's somewhat inefficient for it to become my training.

In the afternoon of the day I met Noel-neesan and took the『Pass』from her.

After returning to the inn, Elk requested me with a docile expression. 『I want to train』.

In short, she is happy that I have made a team with her, and it's an honor for her that I trust her, but the current her and me are not a good match.

She didn't want to remain a comrade in name only, neither did she want to only keep on relying on me.

She didn't want to be a hindrance to me, while going to various danger area or while doing various other quotes, so she wanted to get strong.

Well, I thought her ambition is good, and also hesitated in rejecting her feelings, so i agreed to her.

Though I had rejected her before by saying I can't teach, still I'm here training with her.

This type of mock battle training is being done everyday.

We're doing somewhat a real battle, so even if the time is less the things she could are more, including that she learns more while harvesting and exploration, and presents them all here in this『Training』.

[AK: dont get the part… does it mean she knew minato dont or she knew more after training…]

[ET: It means she learns in the training and she also learns it during doing quests and whatnot. She even presents the new things she learnt in the quests and whatnot section during training.]

The portion she learnt there is presented here, gets improvement scores, continues training……this cycle is running.

This is the way of training I did with mom. The only thing I could refer to.

But of course, in my case it was a battle royal between mom's sparring and demons of forest. That spar was a ultra-serious battle of about 30 min~ 1 hour long.

By the way, the monsters hunted, were either served as food in that day's dinner, or stored in pantry as preserved foods, otherwise they would be given as fodder to many pets mom had.

In this training too, I can feel like Elk is getting stronger time to time.

Although it's only my feeling while fighting her.

☆☆☆

After the sparring is completed, during the time Elk is cooling down while reviewing her results, this is the time I enter my training.

Though, it's only weight and shadow training only.

It's my daily routine since the time from western-style house. Just in case, I'm doing it everyday.

My physical strength is more than enough, so for it to not decline, I have devised a scheme in my training……to be honest, I can't call this training to be efficient.

In truth recently -or rather, from somewhat before I left the house- , I don't feel pain or anything doing push-ups or sit-ups.

Aside from maintaining the current condition, to get more stronger I need more harsher training, I can increase the number of times of my current training but it would increase my time, and also I have no other way too……

「That, can't you do something about your habit of leaking out what you think?」

「Hm?」

Suddenly a voice from behind hits me.

There Elk is standing while sending her beautiful reproachful stares at me. Not good Not good, looks like I leaked out my words again.

And, the clothes she is wearing is different from her usual ones, no I haven't seen her wearing it at all.

「……? What happened?」

「No, it's just that those clothes suit you」

「R-Really? Well, Yeah, Thank you」

Right now, what Elk is wearing, or rather is equipped with is not what she usually wears, the memento of her mother + low quality ready-made clothes……but, everything she is wearing is a brand new, order-made goods.

The hemp cloth with a feeling of oldness, has changed to a healthy and clean cloth. It's texture too is different.

On her waist is another new robust looking leather belt.

And there is also the memento of her mother, that『Dagger』.

More than anything the main fascinating thing made with fine quality high grade substance is the armor.

Though it's an armor, it isn't something massive.

It's a light armor. This covers the minimum important parts and helps in not restricting movement.

In my previous life's RPG, only thieves would wear armor like that.

This refreshing green colored armor is, yes, something we requested Noel-nee san

and ordered it at some trusted armor shop. It's made from the scales and skin of the big-serpent -It's got its official name『Naga』now- and also other materials.

At that time she had said「Just tell me if you need weapon, armor, custom-made article, everything is OK」, so I took her offer.

As expected, making custom-made armors and other things from monsters raw materials is popular among adventurers, so when we took our raw materials the shopkeeper admired the high level of the materials and full-heartedly started making it.

Along with that, we ordered other things to be made too, but that's for some later date.

And, Noel-nee san who acted as intermediary between the manufacturers, told us that the same type of articles in market cannot be compared to our articles. It's weight is not more than a feather, but it's hardness, strength and the pure iron inserted inside it cannot be broken easily. Demon raw materials are really awesome.

Incidentally, using the skin without scales, we had them to be processed into clothes like undergarments.

At one glance, each and every is first-class goods that that a rookie adventurer would is not fated to get, only a veteran adventurer might be able to get them.

Yeah, it does look great on her.

But, the scales and skin of『Naga』were both green. After the manufacturing, it became even more bright.

Inevitably, Elk's armor and clothes are both green.

And, Elk's hair and eyes too are green, so after me being『Man In Black』, this time Elk is becoming『Woman In Green』……but like I care

Well her clothes are green, her armor made from scales is dark green almost black you can say……there is not much difference in the hue, so it's alright, probably.

Incidentally, for them brand new equipments, the required money was given by me to her as a loan.

At first I had thought of distributing the reward from『Naga』taking in the consideration of her financial conditions, this time it wasn't on whim, but stubbornly Elk didn't accept it.

She said『You defeated it 100% that's why it's all yours. If you want to team up with me, then do that work perfectly』. Well it's something like her personality.

That's why, with interest rate I lend her the money……though I'm praying that she forgets about it by the expiration date.

After all, though it's needed, but I don't want to do money lending and borrowing between friends.

It's more natural to think of it as a present from a man to a woman, at least for me.

Elk was against the me offering the raw materials to be made into equipments, but this time I won.

I just said, If you're going to team with me, then you should have equipment that I can rest assured that you will be safe.

She, who doesn't think it's good to rely on me, naturally didn't made a good face at my request, but there wasn't any problem in my request.

It's natural to think, that the other party who is going to be your partner should also have even if a little high survival rate. Even if it's said to be overprotective.

And, when it was made,

「～～～♪」

……She seemed really happy.

The green colored armor equipped on the arms and shoulder, and the clothes covering the body.

After all, as an adventurer, she must've have more or less admired these kind of equipments.

Elk realized my eyesight looking at her with glitter in eyes, did get startled as bit, but without explaining or anything just turned around.

「W, Well I still think it's beyond my means to normally get it……but yeah I'm happy. Since the raw materials are high-class, so it would increase the survival rate」

「Yeah Yeah, it's fine if you even think that」

Like that for a while, while Elk was getting rid of sweat from training, she looked at her right-now-praised equipment with glittering eyes. Whatever she says, in the end she does like it.

Maybe, the cooling down exercises are some sort of stretching exercise, but to me it's only looks like she's making a pose.

The action of the diligent and beautiful Elk in a perfect costume of both hue and design, looks like a fashion show to me.

It has been 16 years and some months since I came to this world, the memories and sense of values deeply rooted into me, cannot help but look at the attire of adventurers as some sort of cosplay.

Though it's imprudent to say, but. Let me declare! It's a sight for sore eyes!

While I was thinking this and that, before I knew it Elk stared at me with reproachful eyes. Huh, did I again leak it out from mouth?

「Anyone would be worried, if you make a triumphant pose with a satisfied expression while looking at someone」

……Looks like I need to care of some bad habits inside me.

Anyway, while coversating like that we both completed the preparation, and decided to return to City of Volca.

after we had our breakfast there, for some reason, we both needed to go to adventurer guild.

☆☆☆

It has been almost two weeks since we defeated『Naga』.

We didn't had to do much other than giving information, getting the money and taking the raw materials of『Naga』.

Incidentally, I asked whether we could get all the raw materials of Naga to the person in charge, who by coincidence was Riin-san. She said normally we would get it but this time it's different.

After all, this『Naga』is an unidentified new demon.

In this case, it would be sent to the guild's and country's various research institutions as a sample for research.

Well, even if I got it all it wouldn't be used up by me alone, on the contrary the reward for the parts would be paid with cash.

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「Hello, good morning……oh,it's you again Riin-san」

「Oh, are you unsatisfied with me?」

The familiar receptionist Riin-san says as such while positioning her glasses with finger with a not so interesting face(She's normally cool, so it's hard to guess her facial expressions).

「No, I didn't mean it like that……something like, it felt like it's not only coincidence to meet you every time」

「Yeah, I too haven't seen you talking to any other guild personnel other than this person」

Is there a system that the person in charge of your registration will after that keep on continuing various other supports too? Or else, doesn Riin-san has some exclusive work of observing us?

[ET: The secretary is still of he/she/it gender. So maybe she is the secretary]

「There is nothing like that, even I'm surprised. Well then, what might be your work today?」

「Ah, Yes. We need to update the Guild Card」

Yes, the『Guild Card Update』. This is today's work.

The『Guild Card』a.k.a ID card……is always updated upon completing the quests or getting achievements during exploration. The whole information is overwritten.

The progress report of quests, their rate of success and failure, achievements of past, information like those are written inside Guild Card.

When asked whether it could be visible, it would be refused.

That『Update』is always being done behind the reception windows, but exceptionally, there are also those who are called for updating their cards.

The『Naga』's extermination is the so-called exception. Just like I said before,『Naga』is an unidentified monster. It's strength and evaluation of my way to defeat it is still not defined.

Since the evaluation cannot be easily given, the guild held a discussion on『Naga』's fighting strength, rank, evaluation in the way of defeating.

Because it's result came out, based on the situation though, it is supposed to be reflected on our cards.

I give the card to Riin-san for update, but……it will take somewhat time to be completed.

For killing the time it would take, I and Elk left the place.

We stood before the bulletin board with the quests put on it……a.k.a『Board』.

In truth, I had been thinking to my first『quest』ever, also the first quest after teaming up with Elk.

For using the waiting time, we came here to take on the quests.

There are many quests put up here, not like I have taken even one.

The boards are separated based on ranks. Just like we had decided beforehand, we stand in front of Rank『E』board, and start staring at the Quest List.

This is something decided by taking Elk's rank into consideration.

Normally, the quests taken should be matching your own rank, and my rank after becoming an adventurer recently is『F』. It might be me singing my own praises, but these quests which even Elk can do without breaking a sweat, is something not suitable for me.

But, if I took a Quest based on my level, then it would put Elk in danger, so it's decided to go with Elk's rank.

「You would get really bored, is it still fine?」

「It's fine It's fine. It's okay for the first one to be like this」

Once again singing my own praises, but an easy to do quest is best.

Well then, what might be the recommended quests……Whoa, there are many.

○Collection of medicinal plants

Place: Plains of East Volca

Reward: ……3 Silver Coins (It might change based on the quantity and quality of delivered goods)

○Subjugation of Stray Wolves

Place: Outskirts of Volca. Subjugate at the very least more than 5.

Reward: ……5 Silver Coins

○Guarding an excursion

Guarding the excursion as well as ensuring safety of students

Reward: ……5 Silver Coins (It might change based on danger, salary, etc)

○Escort Dealer Group (one way)

From Volca to Listal. Fixed number of 5. First-come-first served basis. Can be selected beforehand

Reward: ……15 Silver Coins

Ye~ah. There are many.

The contents too are various……some though are like part-time jobs, but well, so this is all for a novice barely graduating rank『E』adventurer.

As for medicinal plants, it would work somehow if I know how they look like. It's not much difficult even for me, if I don't get lost.

Wolf is, the same wolf-ish thing inside『Labyrinth』. This too is easy.

Guarding the excursion. It suddenly smells of part-time job.

It's easy, but this『ensuring safety of students』says that I would have to take care of students too.

I'm not good with children……

Escorting the dealer group……it has the highest pay, but it's restraint period is really long.

Or rather where is this Listal? I don't know since I don't have a map for here.

Well it's Rank E, so it shouldn't be that far nor that severe quest.

If I would choose then, Yeah……let's go with this『Wolf』.

In this case, I clearly know the identity of the subjugation target.

Upon asking Elk, I get『Isn't it fine?』as the answer. Alright, then it's selected.

I take out the quest document for accepting it, just then a voice calling us comes from the reception desk, maybe the update is done. Nice Timing.

We both head towards the reception desk, and Riin-san hands over the updated Guild Card.

It's appearance is not much different……I take it in my hands, and check the information written on it and……Woah!!

Ooo!

Looks like it went up a lot!? Even though it was F just some time before.

「It looks like you're surprised……but, it's only the natural evaluation, I think? After all, that『Naga』you both subjugated as been given the rank A」

「No, umm, that……I got help due to many coincidences, rather I did explain it, right?」

「Taking that into consideration, that is the given rank. It was decided that you have the ability to come up to here. Furthermore, you're superhuman strength seems like a

truth」

I got said those words from Riin-san along with a sigh.

I don't know how it spread, but the rumour made by that evil secretary that the『Man in black defeated it using the cave-in』spread out really fast, so I used it during the interrogation.

And that's how I evaded the Guild.

It's still fast to let my name spread, so we both fabricated the information and told the guild.

The place I hit it with『Megaton Punch』was seriously dented, so we evaded it somehow saying it got hit with a large rock. Based on appearance, it would definitely become like that.

The places I hit with electricity and fire were somewhat burnt, we evaded it saying, it was dealt by throwing the torches on the wall.

In truth I am a rookie adventurer, and with those words most believed it. Huge Success.

……There are still some people not believing it, for example Riin-san and many others.

However, many witnessed me carrying『Naga』wrapped on pole, so I couldn't make excuses here. It couldn't be helped.

And so, I just said that『I have more power than normal people』and evaded it.

For them it's only somewhat more physical strength.

Well, that's how I defeated (fabricated) Naga……even so, I got the evaluation that my rank rose up to B.

It's not like I'm not happy with good evaluation, but it's not good to becoming great suddenly. After all there is a saying, the nail that sticks out gets hammered in.

At the very least, it should happen after I get used to the adventurer lifestyle.

「You've completed a great feat. It's never heard of that a rookie adventurer reached rank B in just 2 weeks from the debut date. Furthermore, more than half of it was the time taken to evaluate」

「You're right……. Um, Riin-san, isn't this just too much? I'm only a rookie adventurer with 2 weeks experience?」

「What are you saying. To me, it looks like this also is insufficient」

Riin-san says while being surprised. Eh, is that true?

Maybe I am making a face that needs explanation, Riin-san opens her mouth.

According to her, in this world, the normal opinion of people is that the person who fights solely by themselves can fight against demons of same level or lower level.

That is, when fighting with some room for composure. Well it's only natural, after all it's a life-risking 1 round battle.

Of course, the situation during fights is influenced by luck sometimes……as the rank goes up, it becomes difficult to differentiate between demons and adventurer as both are monsters at that point.

And taking, that『I got lucky』into consideration, my rank is set to B.

「That is true……but have you forgotten that you two delivered large amount of raw materials of『Little Beast』and『Mad Monkey』? It's also a target for evaluation?」

「……Ah」

Shit, there was a blind spot.

Well, if I bring the raw materials of demons of Rank D or C, it's natural to be taken into consideration. Why didn't mind work.

One part of that is reflected in Elk's card, because of that she has reached rank D.

The person herself said『I hadn't done anything!』and is being amazed.

Now now, isn't it fine to train hard to become of same level as the rank.

However, what would happen if they find out that I easily defeated『Naga』. I won't say it, definitely.

「There are various thing I personally find interesting, but with the formalities done, you both will be this rank from now on. Let it be because the luck helped greatly, but you have left a great achievement after all……and that's how it is」

Ah, she's definitely not believing me.

Maybe because she has met me many times that she caught something, or she was sharp from before, but she's certainly doubting. Riin-san's reproachful gaze.

But, it's my favorite! Thanks for the food!!

「……Idiot」

I ignored the cold retort from Elk,

Well, She's an employee of public institution, so I doubt she would spread it everywhere……for the time being, there is no advantage in continuing this talk.

And, from what Elk told me before, the approximate basis for ranks are,

F: Rookie

E: Well graduated from being a rookie. However still not an adult.

D: An adult, more or less.

C: The level that can be called as veteran level. This the growth limit for a person without talents.

B: Experienced Talented Person. The realm of people with talent.

A: Prodigy. The person having power that can never be gained through any way other than miracle.

AA: The Master Class of『Prodigies』. This too is the realm of really great people.

AAA: Hero-class. The people with strength that their name is heard by everyone.

S and more: There is no point in comparing.

It was something like that.

And certainly, the demons rank would also expanded in the same way.

Well, there is no point in grumbling on what has been done. I can only work hard to not fail up to my name.

Pulling myself together, I put the quest document I had been holding since before in front of Riin-san.

Finally, the curtains to my first quest……

「Ah, then I would take the quest in this document」

「Rejected」

……Did not open.

Due to the abrupt『NO』as the reply, both of us are perplexed. Eh, Why was it rejected?

「I'm sorry. I've been notified just some time before. In truth, you two have been called, I've been instructed to guide you both to the interior」

「「Called?」」

Again?

The interrogation for the case with『Naga』should be over lot before. Had I done anything that guild wants me to say?

Hearing that, Riin-san with a somewhat worried face,

「Even I don’t know why. It was the order from above」

「Above? Was it a call from someone superior for something personal」

Eh, what is that? I can only feel bad feeling from it.

Isn’t this pattern where the an influential person tries to take a newcomer with large future ahead under it’s own like a pawn by using authoritative power.

Elk too had thought that, her face is also not so good after all.

Then Riin-san

「Ah, please don’t worry……though it’s a private call, but I don’t think there would be anything that you two need to be worried about」

「? Is it a trustworthy person?」

「Yeah, after all……」

One beat later,

「It’s the Guild Master of this Guild」

「「……Eh!?」」

Chapter 24 - Meeting with Guild Master Part 1

Abruptly we were informed that someone had summoned us, that too, not just anyone in guild but it's head『Guild Master』-san did.

If it was someone from upper echelons in the guild, I would've gone back saying half-assed lines like『My stomach hurts』, but I don't want to be on the bad side of the most influential person in guild, so I responded to the summon.

Riin-san couldn't leave her place as a receptionist, so we were introduced to a staff personnel, a girl, then we both were led into the inner parts of guild.

Even so, why were we summoned by some as great like Guild Master? Yeah, I can't think of anything it all.

For a moment, I thought that some problem occurred during the time with『Naga』, but the next moment, I discarded the thought.

For arguments sake, this timing to summon us is just too late, the questioning is done,『Naga』has been registered as a demon, even the reward has been paid.

I asked Elk, but it was no good.

In fact, in this situation of『Being summoned by Guild Master』, she is getting nervous stiff from before.

From what I heard before, Guild Master is the most influential person in the guild, during younger days was also a great adventurer, many adventurers admire the Guild Master. Well from this story, the reaction of others is quite normal.

「But, you both are really cool, you're both still young, but Guild Master has still summoned you personally」

And,

The guide girl walking in front said such out of blue.

She is wearing guild uniform, has dark brown short-hair and a cute face. Her body is, places that need to be large are large and……oh, just forget it.

「Have you completed some amazing feats? Or else, is there some personal relationship?」

「No, if we knew, we wouldn't have any troubles……」

「It's something out of blue even for us. We're bewildered right now, due to being summoned」

I mean really. Summoning us is fine and all, but at least tell the reason before. Heart and many things need to be prepared.

Even Riin-san said『I haven't been informed too』.

Then,

「I see. I was thinking that, the rumoured black adventurer would be like the hero of fairy tales, living in deep forest, growing and raising tremendous power, and then leaving the place. I was getting excited on this mysterious history」

What is that unnatural guess, which is completely right!?

Creep!? Gross!? What was just now!?

I shudder in front of this staff girl asking me while smiling. The reproachful stares of Elk from behind saying『What is that』, didn't arouse me this time.

Then this time the girl,

「Are you, by any chance his girlfriend?」

——Crap!

Made Elk flustered.

She in front of the spearhead in front of her that appeared without any prior notice (well, it did notify), she stumbled, it's a cute yet troublesome reaction.

「Wha, I, What are you saying out of blue!? I-I'm just his partner!」

「Huh, so that's what it was? I completely thought you guys would have done what needs to be done……ah, are you by any chance『Partner』in that sense」

「What!? W-What are you saying……you trying to tease!?」

「Oh, you didn't realise it? I'm sorry」

「……!!」

「Ah, Elk calm down」

I calm down Elk who has become as red as an apple ready to be harvested.

With her anger and shame, reason is about to go into oblivion. With just this much.

Even so, what is wrong with this girl?

She's already passed mischief and being frank, completely rude. What are they thinking, taking people like her as guild members.

Did they send this hateful staff member with some intention? I can't think any reason behind it.

Anyways, I thought to stop the girl and complain her, but she stopped before.

And,

「Go in, this is the office of Guild Mas (door opens) ter」

During talking, she opened the door, and suggested to enter.

……Is the education of guild staff really fine?

We both were dumfounded at her attitude of entering the room of her superior without any courtesy, while leading guests. But, if it has come to this, now anything can happen.

It wouldn't be good to make other party wait while the door is open, and she would be the one getting rebuked, thinking that we both enter the room.

Of course, I say『Excuse me』while entering.

There is a single old person in the room.

However, not just any old person.

In fact, It's troubling to even call the person an old person.

Around 2 metres tall, dark-skinned, muscular body.

The glint coming from behind the glasses is sharp like a blade, any normal person might even faint from just a stare.

His beard is cut and evened, which increases the intimidating pressure even more, no let me more frank, it's looking like fiend.

No, well I did think the Guild Master would be a male in prime of his life with dignified looks, ……but this is truly outside my expectations. Truly.

It's almost like this person can still take young un's and still be able to live off as an adventurer. Truly, just great.

He is wearing formal dress, but the black toned clothes, scatter the intimidating air of not a great person, but of someone like GodFather of Mafia.

[ET: I feel embarrassed]

……This girl might be killed for being rude.

Looking on the side, Elk is somewhat scared, somewhat dumbfounded, somewhat

perplexed. Yeah, whatever her expression might be, I can easily guess what's in her heart right now.

Then, the head of the room while staring at us with the eyes that would give the SFX『Stare』a life in real world——

「I've been waiting, Minato-dono, Elk-dono. I'm the aide of this guild's guild master, my name is Barracks. Nice to meet you」

——correction, the aide, bend perfect 90 degrees and politely greeted us.

No, you ain't the Guild Master!?

I completely thought you were the one with your intimidating air and whatnot, ugh, now I'm feeling disappointed……

……It's a secret, that I felt relieved somewhat.

But huh? In that case, isn't the Guild Master missing?

The ones in this room are me, Elk, and this newly-introduced Barracks-san.

……And also the guide girl, who just now closed the door by kicking the door.

I won't retort to her delinquent behaviour now.

Is the Guild Master still not here?

Then, Barracks-san makes a troubled expression,

「No, Guild Master is already in this room……」

And tells me that. Just where is that guild master?

I once again survey the surroundings, but there is still only us 4 not anyone else, not even presence of anyone else.

「 ……Before that, I apologize for associating with Guild Master's prank, even though you both were summoned」

「「Yes?」」

Prank? What is that, what does it mean? When did we get into it?

No, don't tell me the summon in itself was a joke. In fact, the Guild Master is not here……

Then, Barracks-san while sighing,

「 ……Can you now stop your pranks, and greet the guests politely?」

From behind us both who have『?』floating above our heads, a voice came.

「Ahaha, Sorry Sorry. No well, it's quite interesting even to spectate, so I couldn't help it. Thank you for your hard work, Barracks」

Along with that voice,

The girl who guided us, while we were having questions about the education of guild members, took large strides and came near us.

Lie that, she passed Barracks-san as though it's natural, and stood in front of us.

Eh, What is this, What the fuck, before we had time to think these words, the figure of girl wavered like heat haze.

The next moment, there's a terrifying scene.

The girl who was looking like a normal guild member, has transformed into something that's completely different from before.

A navy blue, three-quarter sleeved clothes with somewhat similar to priest's robe instead of dress. On top of it something like scarf like soft cloth is put on.

The dark brown short hair, turned into olive brown long hair reaching her waist.

The only things same from before, are the height of her and her baby face, her age too seems the same as our.

In her face -No, in her eyes- is a strange and dignified something present.

Then, she faces us, and while grinning,

「I’m sorry for teasing you both. So yeah, I’m the Guild Master of this guild, Irene. Nice to meet you♪」

That’s right, she declared boldly.

Chapter 24 - Meeting with Guild Master Part 2

『Irene Gemena/Jemina』

She is the great adventurer, who once in past, bellowed her name through the whole continent, after retiring, she got recommended by majority of people, became the Guild Master of guild, and is right now at this place.

As per rumors, her strength is still present, among the adventurers; her name is known as a Living Legend.

That『Living Legend』is right now in front of my eyes, while sitting on a sofa in really relaxing manner, and a smile is floating on her face.

No matter how you look at it, she doesn't look that much older than us, but though she looks like human, she is surprisingly different; her true age is over 400 years, really scary.

She has already has been doing her job as『Guild Master』for over 150 years, well, this is a true legend. People are more than meets the eye.

Incidentally, the data about her which I just rambled about is what Elk told me.

The expression she showed before -When we entered the room only to find Barracks-san—was because she knew Guild Master is a girl.

It means she was bewildered on『Why man? 』and not on『He's got great intimidating pressure!』

If I only had heard this all talk, though it was from Elk, I wouldn't have believed it, but I have seen the glimpse of that power with my eyes.

The『Girl in Guild Member uniform』to deceive our eyes was Irene-san's illusion magic.

I have learnt the basics to see through illusions, but I wasn't even able to sense anything let alone see through it.

Not even a single gap, I can't help but say it's a perfectly mastered technique. My instincts after seeing that, removed each and every suspicions about her personal history.

More than anything, the aura she is clad in.

It is only fluttering like wind, is imposing yet calm, it certainly feels like full of self-confidence. To speak in words, yeah, it's like the atmosphere that shows the『Expert』of some sort.

There is only one other person I knows of, who can be clad in this sort of aura.

Most probably, nope, no doubt about it, this person is the same as mom.

「Well, don't be so stiff and relax. It's not like I called you here for some formal business」

「Eh, is that so? 」

「Yeah, I just wanted to talk with the supernova-kun whose been in rumors now-a-days」

「Ha, Haa」

Irene-san is like this from before.

However, on the contrary to her frank behavior, I and Elk, both are feeling tension.「It's strange to not talk about something after calling you her, for starters, I give my gratitude to you, regarding the case this time」

「Case this time? 」

「It’s not you don’t know, right? It’s about the『Naga』. Thanks to you both, the casualties were prevented to the people using the beginner dungeon」

「No, well, I’m grateful for your praise, but just like we reported, there was a large part of luck」

I had thought to faultlessly evade her questions, but

Irene-san’s corners of mouth curved, she broadly grinned.

Then, she sips the tea from her teacup, while smiling,-

「You don’t have to fabricate it here. All because I know, it was 100% your power that defeated it」

「Eh!?」

-Counterattacks with an unexpected reply as though it is natural.

Unknowingly, both me, and Elk who was quiet from before, trembled our body a little bit.

The reply was just too sudden, for a second I thought it might be on her guesses, but the eyes of Irene-san didn’t had anything like that. Rather than imploring gaze, it was filled with conviction.

「Well, it really is trouble to stand out all of a sudden. It’s quite a good decision. In truth, people without discerning eyes are beautifully getting tricked by your outer appearance」

「Err, no, that……」

「But, I have read your report, it’s quite unbelievable story? I was there at the time of inspection of snake’s corpse. Those scales can’t be burned by the heat of torch. The big lethal scar and other small scars are too much pinpointed for rocks in a cave-in. It was obviously damage inflicted by a blunt weapon or something corresponding to it」

……She knows it. She completely knows it!

From her tone of voice it doesn’t seem like she intends to condemn us for that, but it’s easy to understand her saying『Don’t dodge when I know everything』

She ain’t bluffing. From her whistling yet strong voice, and her gaze which sees through everything, a rookie adventurer can never turn away. It took me too much to realize that.

Irene-san continued her words facing me, who is having trouble in replying,「But well, rest assured. Though I said that, those people from Inspection group are quite busy and didn’t do a close inspection. So publicly, your fabricated story is running.」

「Eh, is that so? 」

Phew safe. I was troubled if the top brass of guild somehow know about our fabricated report.

Well, in that case, we would be summoned more officially.

But, if accepting Irene-san’s words, we succeeded in deceiving them. For the time being, it’s good to be safe.

Well, it seems like we weren’t able to deceive her eyes though……

「No, in truth, it’s not like that」

「Eh? But before, you were there during inspection, you said……」

「Well that’s how it is? But I knew from even before that. That something like that with just big body-frame won’t be even worth mentioning for your power」「What!? Do you mean by that……? 」

「It’s nothing that complicated. I heard it beforehand. From her」

「……From her? You heard it?」

「Your mother……Lilyn, I mean」

……WTF!?

Eh!? What the hell do you mean by that!? Just frigging tell me!?

My personal information……oh fuck with it for now. Just tell me what she mean by that!?

Irene-san, you were mom's acquaintance!?

「No, more precisely I'm not an acquaintance. After all, we were fellow adventurers who lived together during our active periods. Of course, we were in a team」

For real!?

Fellow adventurer, in other words, her friends from her younger days means. 200 years ago.

Such a big person was a friend with that 'The Epitome of Freedom' mother. Truly, that person is not normal in many meanings.

Let it be with Noel-neesan the other day, let it be this time, just how much well-know is she?

One is the head of great association; one is the head of guild……people she knows are all not normal.

[ET: Check yourself once, you'll understand it]

Then, from the current information, another unexpected reaction came flying from truly unexpected place.

「……!? Wha, Please wait a moment, um, err, I-Irene-sama!」

Elk, who turned into a statue who can only consent to words, suddenly revived and shouted. What happened to her?

「Hey, put down the『-sama』suffix. It's something else if this was a public place, though」

「I-I'm sorry. Err……Guild Master! Um, the party you said you were in your adventurer days, I can only think of one, don't tell me……」

「Uh, yeah, you're not wrong. It's the one you're thinking」

「B-But, that party is already……what does it mean that Minato's mom was one member of it, and also you met her recently……?」

「……? Umm, what might you two be talking about……」

I still don't get the contents of the aim for this talk.

Most probably it's that. My nemesis, adventurer's fundamental knowledge, definitely it's involved in the contents of this talk.

There, mom too is somehow involved.

「I see. Seems like Lilyn hasn't told anything about herself to you at all. In other words, Minato-kun, you don't even know about『Wasp Spiders'』too?」

「……『Wasp Spiders'』?」

What is it, never heard of it.

At this moment, a glare saying『For real』from Elk came flying at me. What, is it a really famous story? Like I said before, I don't have common sense.

[ET: I take this sentence in all meanings.]

「You see,『Wasp Spiders'』was the name of the party I was in when I was an adventurer. Of course, Lilyn too was affiliated to them」

「Mom was? 」

「Yeah that's right……Minato-kun, it seems like you really don't know anything, this is one good opportunity. How about hearing an old-tale?」

Saying that, Irene-san drinks the whole tea from cup and wets her throat.

I somehow knew, the words that’s going to come out of her mouth from now, will let me move closer to the mom I don’t know yet.

Chapter 25 - The Legend of 『Wasp Spider』

『Wasp Spider』is the name of the legendary party that used to be active around 200 years ago, it seems.

Their achievements are uncountable; they have completed quests taking highest compensation from the state guest of a country. The numbers of them would seem like a joke.

For example, at that point, several hundreds of years had passed since the establishment of『Adventurer Guild』, but in this world of sword and magic, there were still many places where the humans didn't go to, in other words『Unknown Lands』, there were many at that time.

Reason was also simple, because there was too much danger, they didn't explore it.

It would've been easy if the whole army of a country moved, but there was neither money nor time, nor composure to do that.

The『Wasp Spider』had travelled more than half of those『Unknown lands』during their active period. They spread (sold off) that information in all directions using guild as intermediary, with just that much they had gotten money to buy some countries for themselves.

Furthermore, at some place demons appeared strangely, through their attacks the large country having one hundred million citizens, seriously fell into the state of line between life and death, even the country's whole army wasn't able to handle the assault, it was also difficult to maintain the line of defense, at that time『Wasp Spider』gallantly came and pushed back the assault of demons. It happened in various places, various times, presently, in many countries, they are being treated as heroes.

There are still many more deeds of them, but the information about the members' of『Wasp Spider』is still a mystery, except for the current guild master, Irene-san.

The things made public current are……as following.

There were 6 members in total. Everyone was human, furthermore only girls.

Each and every one of them, had battle power rivaling thousand enemies, and had a dazzling sense of justice.

And currently, aside from Irene-san, all others have died.

As for the legendary party, the only known information is just this much.

But still it was deeply-rooted admiration, and the girls under concern had their names and achievements bellowed through the whole world.

……But, this information is all sh*t crap.

That is something the sole survivor (Big fatty lie) of the party speaks.

And, let me tell you before, that leaving me alone, as I'm oblivious to common sense and knowledge, Elk, who was listening to the whole true story, was getting surprised each time.

「As for the first big lie is, in our『Wasp Spider』there wasn't even a single genuine human member. Like beast-women, vampires, everyone looked like a human but in truth they weren't」

Irene-san, herself is one of them.

She is more or less classified as『Human』, but she's kind of special.

In general she is called as『Resurrection of Ancestors』, her body is that of human, but inside it the power that her ancestors used to have, in other words it's something

like『Atavism』.

In the case of Irene-san, her ancestors' were『High Elves』, the powerful tribe even among the elves, she had many other sorts of blood awakened, so though she is classified as human, she has been endowed with different magical power and long life span.

Incidentally the truth of the so-called『Resurrection of Ancestors』is not told the general public.

Like that, Irene-san is said to be the non-human in the『Wasp Spiders'』, but the truth is completely different.

Irene-san was the only person who was most near human within『Wasp Spiders'』

「Next, we all were basically egoistic and self-centered people, so we didn't had even a speck of sense of justice, that's why we never moved on something like that」

Well, I can agree to this one.

Heroic Tales are mostly made up, sense of justice in that would be more suspicious-looking. ……Or maybe, my viewpoint is crooked.

But, when she told me the truth of them saving the afore-mentioned country from the invasion of demons, even I got perplexed. The truth was: They won in a lottery within that country, so if the country was to be destroyed they won't get their shares.

No Well, it's a person's own will to participate in wars, not like I have a say there.

「And now the last, this might be the biggest lie. We disbanded『Wasp Spiders'』150 years ago, but not even a single member of it has died. All are alive and pimping」

at that secret revelation, Elk almost fell.

「Right now, everyone is doing what they want and living their remaining years of life. We don't interfere with each other, so we don't even know where exactly they all are. Oh, I just said, remaining years of life, but they all won't die before 1000 years」

「S-So that's how it was, I didn't knew about it……」

Having many shocking truths fired at her, Elk looked at her limits while replacing the information inside her brain and sorting her heart.

Now then, the topic changes, to what I'm interested in most.

「So, one of them was……」

「Yeah, your mother, Lilyn Quadrille of『Succubus Race』. She was my comrade since before the formation of part……and also the leader of『Wasp Spiders'』」

……Holy!

I did think she's not some normal person, but for her to be someone this great.

Well, she didn't tell me herself, so I won't know about it.

「That Lilyn, 2 weeks ago came here and said『My youngest son is going to make a debut as adventurer. Take care of him』. At that time, I heard about your characteristics, so hearing about the case of『Naga』, I immediately understood it was you」

「I see. So mom did such a thing……」

「Yeah, she intruded at 3'o clock in night while I was sleeping, said what she wanted to, subjugated the tea cakes I had prepared, and left like a storm」

「I'm really sorry」

The feeling of respect that came up vanished in thin air.

No, what the f*ck is my mom doing.

However, Irene-san doesn't look like she is worried about it,

「No, no, I don't mind it. On the contrary, I'm relieved that she didn't change even

after hundreds of years」

……So she was like that since 200 years ago too.

Then, as though he was waiting for the right time, Barracks-san brought tea-cakes. Oh, second cup of tea too.

「Well then, let's chat while eating tea-cakes. And also, tell me about her, Lilyn's life style within these some years」

「Ah, Yes, then I'll take up the offer. If it's alright with you, then can you tell more about mom」

「Yeah, don't worry. I will also tell about her embarrassing times too」

Irene-san cracks a smile.

I got somewhat tensed up, knowing her title, but she is mom's best friend (?), so it's easy to talk to her.

I can spend my time meaningfully, interesting.

「Ah, by the way, those tea-cakes, are the same as the ones Lilyn ate on that night, they also have the same quantity. You're both parent and child, so maybe your hobbies and thoughts too are identical. You can eat it all without restrain?」

……She's somewhat troubling, though.

I suddenly look towards Barracks, a stare saying『I'm sorry』cam flying at me.

☆☆☆

After that, the flower bloomed on the trouble stories of mom.

Like mom acting like that since 200 years ago, or her moving on her whim and also moving her friends or Irene-san getting troubled by her actions or them both overdoing their evil deeds.

But, when I heard that the reason for the disbanding of『Wasp Spiders'』was the pregnancy of mom, I seriously wanted to dig a hole and bury myself in it.

Well, the talk about disbanding was brought up many times before, so this acted as a trigger.

From me it was, how I was raised up by her, how was mom during that time, and her messed up deeds.

And, it's embarrassing, but also about me going up on the stairs of adult men unexpectedly when mom attacked me when I was small.

Irene-san laughed sweetly with somewhat reminiscent feeling, every time she heard my talks.

As for me, I also got to know about the not-yet-known side of mom, so it was a quite worthwhile time.

……Though, the truths were more that I didn't want to hear.

My sole close person, Elk, was an outsider in all those talks, but she looked happy as an adventurer who got to know about a part of the adventure records of legendary party.

While I talked about, my birth and how I was raised, and the forest where I took my daily training, Irene-san laughed.

「Ahahahahaha, I see. Lilyn only said you were raised in a『Woodland』so I couldn't make out where, but……of all places it was『Woodlands of Gradwell』, eh, you're raised in one great place.」

[ET: I couldn't find any other name more similar than Gradwell. Btw, it's one good company.]

「? That place had a name? 」

「Yeah. From what I know, the only woodlands where demons you told, appear is only there. I see I see, so she raised you there」

She guessed the name of forest……『Woodlands of Gradwell』just from the species of demons I told her, it seems.

Well, mom too told me, the forest is a dangerous place, and I trained there, so this is not much surprising for me.

I suddenly look besides me; Elk is, sending me a glare saying『Eh』as though she saw something unbelievable. Seriously stop it, it's embarrassing.

「Guild Master? Um, that『Woodlands of Gradwell』are……」

「Yes, what happened, Elk-kun? 」

「Err, I only read in documents, but……I remember reading, it's a forest of demons located on the farthest ends of this continent, and not some place humans can live in? 」

「Yeah, that's right. After all, it's considered as a forest where one if enters, cannot come out, as for its difficulty level as a dangerous area, it's AA. It's a hell, with average demons there having Rank A. If carelessly approached, even a trained army would go extinct easily」

……I know it's late, but I got raised in one frigging great place.

「And, the magic circle which threw you into that『Labyrinth』in an instant, isn't magic, but a magic item. During our times in『Wasp Spiders'』there was a person who specialized in making things like that, so Lilyn may have asked her」

「Hmm……」

Like that, me and Irene-san, forgot the tension that was present at first, and ended up in deep talks.

In Elk's case, rather than tension, it seemed like mental fatigue is accumulating.

Before I knew it, it was forenoon.

「Oh, we talked too much. It would be bad if I don't return back to my work now. Barracks, preparations」

「Understood」

Barracks-san left the room bowing once. Maybe for the preparations of work after this.

「Well then, looks like we have call it a stop now. How about eating lunch here? 」

「Ah, no, we can't receive that much favor」

「And also, we both are having plans to accept quests today after this, so we'll excuse ourselves」

「Hmm, I see. Ah, I called you guys while you were about to take quests」

Then it can't be helped, Irene-san looked like she agreed to it, and got up from the sofa. We two also followed her.

「I don't mind you coming here, if something happens. Based on my position, I can't give you two special privileges as adventurers; you two would also not want it, right? 」

「Yes. After all, Mom is mom, and I am me. I want to live like a normal adventurer, and work my way up steadily」

「Though, you're not『Normal』, at all.」

Yeah, I know.

「That's right, keep up the high-spirits. Well, the ambitions of youngsters is dazzling for us aged people…… Well, I won't give preferential treatment, but I will help you in consultation, though, so you can come at any time」

「Yes, Thank you very much. Please take care of me from now on」

Elk and me, both give a bow, and left the room……or at least that's what we had thought,

「Ah, before that, just 3 more」

「Yes?」

But, we got stopped by Irene-san. What is it? 3? Quite strange it is.

「First is, Minato-kun, do you have some kind of goal?」

「Goal, is it?」

「That's right. As an adventurer……no as a person, you should have a somewhat clear goal; it would help you get motivated more」

I see, I think about that too.

Whatever I do, having a clear goal will help raising the motivation. Establishing that beforehand is always good and efficient.

Now that I think about it, after getting out in the outer world, I have never thought about that and only thought about being an adventurer. Yeah, it was a blind spot.

But, what might be the goal as an adventurer?

「Now that is my main concern, Minato-kun……」

Then, Irene-san puts her hand inside her robe, and maybe from the inner pocket, took out a single paper.

「I had thought, what if you hadn't decided on any goal. So, I think that you should go with the common goal of every male, that is『To become strong』」

「What is this then? 」

「Yeah, I have a『List』」

「List?」

「Yeah. If you get strong enough to defeat the monsters written there, then even Lilyn would accept you a genuine adult」

well it's all on my point of view, Irene-san adds that at the end.

I see, I'm grateful for it.

For an adventurer, there are other goals too, like exploring unknown lands, or finding legendary treasures, but in an occupation like this, the main thing needed to live on, is absolute『Power』.

Moreover, if it is Irene-san's point of view, it must be true, in other words, motivation come out naturally.

Thank you very much, saying those words I take it. Well well, so what sort of demon is written here…… (flip)

……

……

……Err, just what the hell might this be.

I might be showing an expression, she had already expected. And, also Elk who is looking from side.

I can easily understand it, from her showing a peerlessly sweet smile.

And, this won't be a prank, but what she had actually thought might be good for me. I mean the list.

……But isn't this……

Exceed Hopper Subspecies
Tropical Tyrant
Inferno Peacock
Giga Worm

Kraken
Destroyer
Golden Sphinx
Mictlan Demon
Soleil Tiger Rare Species
Eight-Forked Serpent
Salamander Undead

Á Bao A Qu

Finished, 12 species in total.

……This is array of demons; I neither have heard of nor seen.

Even so, somehow I can feel this line-up is more dangerous than『Naga』……

In two parts, words like『Subspecies』and『Rare Species』is also added……

In fact, 『Eight-headed Serpent』and『Kraken』are two monsters, that were f*cking famous even in my previous life……Do they exist? In this world?

W-Well, it's not like the strength always coincides with the feeling given by name. It's not necessary that the monster will be strong if its name sounds strong……

But, in this case, they would coincide, right…….

……Well, my goal is to get strong to fight against them, 『Some day』in late future. For the time being, I will just take it……

Irene-san, who has been looking at my face which is staring the list,

「……Now for 2nd,……Minato-kun, is true that you never stepped out of『Woodlands』?」

「? Yeah it is true……but why you ask? 」

「No, it's something I've been thinking for a while, I get the feeling I have met you somewhere before……Though, I don't seem to remember it」

「……? 」

That…… is not possible?

After all, I really never left that forest. Except for the time I handled the bandits with mom.

Leaving out the bandits that I met (and half-killed), or the girls who were kidnapped, I never knew about other relatives other than mom before leaving the house, and after that, he first one was, Elk.

Well, even if I glanced at them others, but still I don't have any memory of Irene-san at all.

The possibility of Irene-san glancing me while passing by, is also non-existent.

Irene-san hasn't left this area for some years, in the first place, mom would notice her if she did pass us by, after all they are friends for more than 200 years.

And so, in the end, the mystery couldn't be solved. ……It can be misunderstanding or accidental resemblance, right?

And now, the left last 1 is?

「……For the last message, Lilyn left a message for you」

Irene-san looked like she still is having suspicions, but she has left it on hold for a while.

「Message?」

「Yeah, it's encouragement to you, who is going to walk on the path as an adventurer」

Err, it is……She gestures as though, she were trying to recall,

「She said……『If you ever got strong like me, your mom will get pregnant with your child』」

「Excuse me」

Escape.

While hearing the crackling laughter, I lead Elk by her hand, and leave the room in full speed.

No, well it might be a joke, argh, not that -Like hell I will accept if it ain't joke- , just what is that person to leave a message like that to another person!? Even Elk heard about it!!

And Irene-san! Why would you need to explain that thing in details while Elk --A third party who only knows about mom's incoherent behavior as rumors—is sitting beside me! Read the atmosphere! What are you going to do if Elk starts looking at me in some other manner!

「……It's alright. Ever since I have looked at your ridiculous ways, I have stopped applying common sense on you」

No, can I be relaxed by that!?

……At any rate, Mom if I ever commit suicide, it's all because of you.

☆☆☆

Minato and Elk left the place without looking back. While one is murmuring『Oh stop! 』with face completely red.

……maybe it should be, both.

「Ahahaha……Isn't he quite pure and good child? Though his personality is different…… but he had similar atmosphere to that of Lilyn」

He couldn't hear the murmuring of only person left in room, Irene Jemina …though he had powerful hearing ability.

「……Maybe that's why; Lilyn is even using Noel-chan……and is『worrying』about him」

Chapter 26 - First 『Quest』

We both, after returning from the cluttered room in the interior of guild, stood in front of the『Board』from before, for accepting a『Quest』.

And, the quest we chose to took before『Subjugation of stray wolves』was gone.

What, so they have good turnover rate. I was aiming for it, depressing.

It couldn't be helped, for searching another new quest; I once again faced towards the『Board』.

Then,

「Yo~, are you both adventurers called Minato and Elk?」

「Yes?」

Abruptly, I was called out from behind.

Upon turning back, there stood an unfamiliar, macho-old-man.

I could understand that he too should be an adventurer for being inside guild.

[ET: You sure, Minato, that ain't spooderman?]

Along, with the reason he called us out.

「Is it true? That you both……subjugated that monster called『Naga』from the labyrinth? 」

「Yeah. Well, we were helped by fortune too」

「No, even so that is awesome. You're too splendid, although young」

……Following it,

「About that, how about doing work with us one time together? 」

……Well, as I expected.

It had been a lot recently.

The rumor of me and Elk (To be accurate, it was me only) bringing back the body of the newly found demon……『Naga』spread out too quickly.

Moreover, the guild has given it a rank A, something a novice adventurer can never fight against, even more troublesome.

『The party of a man in black and a woman with green hair』became the most popular topic.

Due to that, the people who want to meet us have increased.

Because of all this, for some few days, we both left the inn early morning, came back late at the time when there are less people, without coming to the guild - not like we had been summoned, though - , like that our cycle was running, but still there people who would sniff us out.

During eating meals in dining halls, within the inside and outside of city, and at worst people even intruded in the inn.

And, the people who commanded most adventurer within them, moreover almost all of them, tried persuading us saying『Won't you team up with us?』or『Will you enter our team?』, like that.

Well, wanting to court a talented person would be a normal thinking for a person in same occupation.

That so even more, in an occupation like this, which has life and death on-line all relying on the ability.

However, we both just recently teamed up, so we didn't have composure to think about those things, so we turned down all offers. Of course, adding various reasons.

This time too, I respectfully declined.

Even so many times they hanged on saying『Don't be so cold~』or『We don't mind even if you're rookies』, but eventually we somehow made them pull back.

He seemed to be like a stubborn person, who would come once again if he gets opportunity, but we got him to draw back, so it's better right now. It would be troublesome if someone other came, it would be better to quickly choose the quest and leave the reception.

I faced the board……and Elk was selecting some conspicuous quests while I was talking. Indeed, she knows how to deal with something.

So well~……

○Collection of medicinal plants

Place: Plains of East Volca

Reward: ……3 Silver Coins (It might change based on the quantity and quality of delivered goods)

○Guarding an excursion

Guarding the excursion as well as ensuring safety of students

Reward: ……5 Silver Coins (It might change based on danger, salary, etc)

○Subjugate the Kobolds

Subjugate Kobold settles within the huts in the interiors of Ritorasu Mountains.

Reward: ……10 Silver Coins

○Escort Ruin Research Expedition Team

Escort the expedition team, re-investigating the『Labyrinth of Naga』. For Several Days

Reward: ……15 Silver Coins (Risk allowance separate)

The 2 above were there before too……

First of all, I'm not good with kids so, 2nd one kicks the bucket.

The last one is re-investigation of『Labyrinth of Naga』, was this request from some archaeologist?

It was my home in a sense, but this exploration might be searching if there are more hidden rooms……it might be related to me defeating『Naga』.

Like that, if I, the main leader of this upheaval, the so-called『Adventurer in Black』went, obviously I would get caught into troublesome problems. So, this too rejected.

So the left one is.『Subjugate the Kobolds』.

I would just accept it as a subjugation mission; the conditions for completion too are easy to understand.

I confirm from Elk by looking her, a reply saying『Isn't it fine? 』came back from her eyes.

Alrighty, so we would take this one.

「Though, it would in the end, be a tiring quest for you. Kobolds are Rank E demons, after all」

「No, no, it's not like that. Based on circumstances, it will be a good experience. Probably」

「Same for me. It will be an opportunity to examine the fruits of training I have been doing with you……Hm? But this, there isn't the required bodies written」

Huh? Then, I wouldn't understand how much I had to kill.

「It must probably mean, killing all present there……Don't they know the exact numbers? In that case, it would be troubling for the person doing the quest.

Sometimes, ones like this are also present」

In this way, we wouldn't be able to know when our quest be completed. Wouldn't it help by asking at the reception?

「Well, that's true, but we should keep in mind that opponents numbers might be more than expected, right? If we went thinking it would 10 of them, then it would be troubling to encounter 50 or 100 of them……Well it might easy for you, though」

「No, that will……surely take more time」

「……You won't say impossible, huh」

Well, yeah.

I don't know what sort of demon Kobolds are; neither have I seen their appearance, so it would be better to see it.

But, E means, on the same level as that of goblins in『Labyrinth』and below those monkeys. They wouldn't be able to give me a hard fight.

100 would be troublesome……bare-handed, that is.

But, from the contents of quest, their numbers might be that much which could fit in the hut, so they may not be much.

「Hmm, you're both doing a quite interesting talk?」

Suddenly, I heard such a voice from behind.

We both turn back, to find a man being there.

He was somewhat tall, with reasonably balanced physique.

Orange hair, his face was good, but his ears were pierced.

He didn't have the handsome boy atmosphere. More accurately it should be…… Frivolous lad? Though, his skin ain't black.

He too might be an adventurer, based on his attire.

「I haven't seen you two here, you guys, newbies? You were talking something very reliable, so it piqued my interest」

「……Who're you? 」

Elk said. Whoa~, her wariness was completely laid out.

And, the frivolous lad, in defiance of it, continues.

「Ah, sorry, sorry, I should do the self-introductions. I'm Zali, more or less I'm an adventurer. Nice to meet ya~」

The frivolous lad……correction, Zali, cracked a smile while showing his white teeth (glitter☆)

However, Elk still remained unresponsive to that too. No, I do understand her feelings.

His way of interacting was unnatural……in fact, the fact he wanted to call out to us from start, I can understand that from the start.

Deducting that, he, at first glance looks like a playboy. Elk wouldn't be feeling too good being called out by such a guy.

His motive, maybe the invitation……or simply flirting……

「So, you guys seemed troubled while choosing the quests……Hm? Are you perhaps」

The moment Zali was about to say something looking at me,

「Oi Zali, what'cha doing?」

Oh, they increased.

Along with the cheeky and low voice, 2 men, maybe Zali's acquaintance or something came towards us from his rear.

They looked like middle-aged old mans.

Dark complexion with medium build, and unshaven stern face.

One side was muscular gorilla-macho-man, the other one, an obese with too much fat.

These 2 approached us while we were in the middle of talk with Zali.

「You're getting late, Zali……huh, so you're flirting, eh?」

「No, no, it's not like that. I just happened to hear something interesting. And, they looked quite troubles, so I called out to them」

Zali replied.

No, we were not basically troubled by it. The contents too might be helped if we went to reception.

Then, the 2 men (middle-aged) looked me and Elk in order……

「I see, so that's what it was. It can't be helped then」

「Yeah, they're rookies after all. Well, there may be various things to be troubled with」

……Obviously they have become more talkative, and this ain't my imagination.

They even have a strange smile on their faces.

Then, the person to first open the mouth, was the obese-guy.

「Hey, Miss, if you're troubled, shall we help you?」

They try to persuade Elk alone……while grinning.

……Oi, you f*cking ignore me.

「As a rookie, there may be more times to be troubled without knowing what to do, right? In that case, we will teach various things to you」

「That's right, we will teach politely and it will be very detailed」

The gorilla-macho-man to adds himself, and invited her with the ulterior motives spilling out.

Well, how did he get guts to frankly invite like this way……did he think it would be a success?

In reality, only 'annoyance' word was oozing out of Elk's face.

Naturally, Elk won't nod to their invitation.

「Oh, I remembered, we were also going to take a quest right now, how about, you come together with us?」

「That's a brilliant idea! It would be a good experience, and we would also help! Hmm? So, how about it? 」

「In the end, I refrain. I even have an acquaintance」

Saying that. My shoulders are touched by Elk.

At that time, for the first time, the middle-aged men look at me.

Oh, here comes the stare saying『Who the fuck is this guy? 』……You guys really can use you're stares splendidly.

He diverted his eyes from me in a second and,

「This guy? He doesn't seem to reliable, leave it, leave it」

「You'll grow more if you're with veteran adventurers like us, rather than this weak guy, right? 」

「Yeah, we are all Rank D. It won't hurt to look after some rookies? 」

……You're damn below me!

No, well, generally, Rank D would mean, more or less an『Adult』.

Elk had said before, the level a normal person with efforts can reach is Rank D or C, at most somewhere in the lower B.

So, based on that they might be adults? ……so what?

AH, by the way, how can I hide it from you, the person who gave rank B was Irene-san.『You're this much strong, and due to this others won't be able to shun you based on your ranks』, she said that. So like that, I'm suddenly Rank B.

Due to the shamelessness of the middle-aged men, the frivolous lad had his shadow get thinner, so he finally spoke up. His mouth would remain light, I think.

「Hey, Gallon, Bordo, don't say like that, why don't we take him too together?」

「AH? What'cha sayin? 」

Oh? Now this was unexpected.

I completely thought this frivolous lad, Zeli-kun, would go with Elk-only faction……but he also invited me.

No, not like I'm actually happy.

However, as though natural, the reaction of middle-aged men towards me was negative.

「Oi, Oi, stop joking. Why would we invite a bastard? 」

「That's right. Rookie would only become burden」

Hey, weren't you damn people speaking something like looking over rookies? Huh?

「Well, Well, don't be so cruel. Think normally, the more the merry, right? Furthermore, he isn't that much weak」

Zaril says while not getting carried by the flow. I've got a teeny bit good impression about him now.

But, I'm curious about the contents.

Did he hear my talk with Elk just before? I yes, then from where?

Was it from『100 Kobolds』or somewhere around『Woodlands』et cetera?

There are many adventurers who boast, so I don't think I would need to be worried about each and everyone one, there is no need to be stiff.

Just, if they know about my identity from the rumor about『Adventurer in Black』, it would turn into something messy. Mainly, due to rumors.

While I was thinking all that, the middle-aged men still were having a stare of Elk: Yes, Me: No, and were grumbling.

「But you see, looking over 2 rookie is even a little that for us, right?」

「That's right. And women are different, but men grow by facing the harshness of world, so ain't it a parental affection that we're sending him on a somewhat difficult path?」

……I don't want to be near these guys.

I understood Elk too was thinking the same thing from her eyes, and we both decided to leave the place with just quest document in hands.

Old-men? Just f*cking leave them alone.

「O-Oi, Wait……」

「It's fine. I don't know what the quest is, but have fun with your group of three」(Elk)

Elk spaded away the restrain of obese-guy, and left the place.

I heard various other things, but after a clicking of tongues, nothing else was heard.

Either they are good at giving up, or didn't want too much trouble, they, in the end, didn't chase after us.

……Some time later, there was one who looked for more time at us than other two, it worried me a bit.

「Seriously, I hate those type of people……. Why are there more adventurers who see

women with eyes like that」

「It can be helped right? Well, I won’t agree to it, but basically there are more ruffians in this industry. It won’t be good to be worried about each and everyone」

「Well, that is right. Then, let’s take up the quest already」

While waving the quest document in hands, Elk and I, both moved towards the reception.

Well then, let’s take up our first quest『Subjugate the Kobolds』……really fast!

Chapter 27 - Kobold and Landslide and Egg Part 1

We submitted the quest document to the reception of guild……maybe because the difference in rank, Riin-san sent me stare saying『Huh?』- Well I, a rank B adventurer is taking on a rank E quest, it's only natural - , now an hour later.

I and Elk, were ascending the mountain road of『Ritorasu Mountain』where the hut is located.

The mountain side would come in sometime, so we might be near our destination.

From conclusion, this『Ritorasu Mountain』was more safe compared to the『Labyrinth of Naga』……that might sound weird, but in this place there was not much danger from demons.

The demons which appeared, were mostly the ones I had already seen in『Labyrinth』, furthermore, Elk herself took care of most of them.

However only once, a demon appeared which I hadn't seen in『Labyrinth』……it was a『Slime』, seeing it I got into high spirits for no damn reason.

A spindle-shaped face with a smile on it……it wasn't anything like that, but its body was in liquid state centering around its core. It looked just like amoeba.

Its bodily fluids was acid, but everything would be over on throwing a stone from a distance and destroying its core, I still touched it once, but the acid didn't had any effect on my skin. It didn't even feel itchy.

Such being the case, without having faced any serious troubles, we were walking.

「Sigh. The air is so good. It would've been better to have brought a boxed-lunch」

「Stop changing a quest into a picnic」

Elk retorted, as always, in a fed-up voice.

So no good, huh. This scarf could change into picnic sheet, so I thought it was a good idea.

Incidentally, for reaching the hut, we left the path, and were no walking through some woodland path,

「Elk, it's about the time we return, do you happen to remember the way back to the path? Like the direction and all」

「Of course, I'm checking time by time, it's natural that I remember it. Though there is not much danger, but the fact that here is a mountain, losing focus will lead to being lost here. ……You don't remember?」

「I did try to, but……not after 5 minutes from entering the mountain」

「……Ah, I see」

Apparently, I seem to have hardcore problem of having no sense of direction. I may have not been born with it from birth. No, I'm serious here.

Looks like I would have to trouble Elk from now on.

Well, I did remember the path to Guild and『Labyrinth』, but the path to sis'『Association』remained to be a mystery.

I made haste into coming here, because there was a possibility of getting lost……but Elk has expertise in that area, so it wouldn't be a problem.

Incidentally, the path takes a little less than 5 hours on foot, and less than 2 hours on carriage, when coming from guild.

That's why normally, when going to『Ritorasu Mountains』, in case a horse couldn't be hired, many people lodge in inns present in villages en route, or camp en route.

So, the reason why, we both completed the whole distance in an hour even while having lunch en route, is very simple.

I carried Elk and ran while having my leg strength enhanced by the wind magic.

Also, for not letting her feel pain from the wind pressure, I once again used『Other Person Enhancement』to increase her basic physical abilities. She was glued to me, so it was even more easy to activate it.

Even so, she suffered from motion sickness……well, take it as a part of training.

「What the hell you mean by a part of training!? I was almost going to return the hot dog」

「Well, well, we were rushing, it can't be helped, right. And, maybe in future, you, Elk, will also move by running that fast, so this is practice for it, only a practice」

「A future like that won't come! I'm a normal human!」

「But, you too can use magic, right?」

「No, I do can use it, but that is……」

Ah, that's right.

I never told it, but in truth, Elk can use somewhat magic. But, it really is somewhat, apparently.

The magic cannot be learnt by training, in the first place, it can't be used at all by a person without talent.

In fact, half of adventurers, are muscle-man faction, with no relation to magic.

Elk had that talent, and specializes in using『Wind』attribute. But only when compared to other attributes.

However, because of her living environment as a child, she didn't had any surplus to study under someone good in that line.

Her mother too wasn't proficient in magic, aside from other techniques, she only learnt basic of basics in magic.

In the end, she couldn't develop her magical talent, gave up on it, and learnt other abilities.

Thanks to that, currently she rarely ever uses magic. At most, she only uses it to ventilate the room and fan herself.

But, from my point of view that is really very much wasteful, I had thought of『Developing』her that area too, so I would include somewhat magic in training.

Fortunately, I had been taught about『Magic Arts』from mom until she drove it into my bones, on the contrary, I myself researched it later on.

Along the way, I created many other new magic which I couldn't use, due to the problem of talent. (*tears*)

And so, if I recall all that, I would be able to teach her about magic, and some of my self-made tricks.

Naturally, they all are limited to the ones that have gotten safety authentication from mom.

That's why, I thought it would be good if she learnt Taijutsu along with Magic, if there was something suited for her, I would teach that too……that was my plan, so I decided to tell Elk about it,

「Even so, I don't think I would ever reach a level where I can run fast than a carriage and still be not out of breath, just like you I mean……」

「Is it like that? I think, if Elk trained more you can reach to this level?」

「What is your basis for that?」

「Intuition」

「……Oh great」

[ET: This is sarcasm]

[AK: …..Oh great, boss]

Elk gave up, silently. ……Had she thought, that it would only get tiring by talking anymore?

But, I seriously am thinking what I'm saying……

As for why? Let's leave for next time.

Well like that, after walking for a while, we finally reached our destination.

Walking the woodland path, when it felt like it had opened up somewhat, we came out to a place with levelled ground.

There was, a simple yet big, hut.

And it's surrounding, demons with head of dog, walking on two legs……Kobolds were roaming in several numbers. In their hands were, club or rusted swords.

For the time, we hide in the brushwood nearby to wait and observe them.

I heard at the reception, the exact numbers of Kobold was yet-unknown.

However Kobolds have more intelligence compared goblins or orcs, and are more coward, so they would run away if they feel danger.

And so, if I brought the proof of some, after killing them, the quest would be cleared.

Incidentally, the evidence which acts as a proof for the completion of subjugation quests, was the raw materials of demons. There are some demons which have their every body part filled with value, and some are with specified valued parts.

「What was it……for a Kobold?」

「The wrist. For stopping fabrication, it is needed to bring many of them together」

……Hand, you going to cut it off? Though, a demon, but it has a human shape, you going to take it off from it?

I get somewhat reluctant……well, it can't be helped in this world or this occupation.

「 ……From what I can see, there are 4-5……inside the hut there might be more」

「Even so, I don't think they have enormous numbers. Is there any need to plan?」

「If you be careful to not get surrounded, then it isn't needed. And, do remember to not hurt the hut」

「Understood. Then, let's go!」

The strategy meeting (?) was over, so I took action as quick as possible.

I had thought of doing surprise attacks in stealth mode, but their appearance is that of a『Dog』 ……they might find me based on scent.

Though wind is blowing downward for them, so that possibility does get low, but I don't know the levels of sense of hearing and smelling of Kobold.

If they found me out upon approaching, the surprise attack would end up as failure, so I chose to deal with them.

Besides, for me, even from this distance, a surprise attack is possible.

I have already checked the conditions of equipped gauntlets and shin guards, Elk too took out her dagger.

And I pick up the small stones around my feet (needed for beating to death),

(Then, we will get out on the count of three. I will take on most of them, Elk, you need to sneak attack on them. Can you do it?)

After noticing Elk nod, I take the stones in my hands which were ready to throw.

(Alright, let's go. O~ne……)

[ET: This is mind-talking. For easier understanding, go read Prison School]

——Plurk! ← The sound of Kobold A's head getting smashed from the stone throw by me.

「Let's go!」

「Where did 2 and 3 go!?」

「Omitted!」

「Huuh!?」

It wasn't like I……got turned into a douchebag, but a single Kobold seemed to have noticed our presence and was about to scream……that's why it was omitted……I have a perfect reason, see. I will explain it later.

The other Kobolds were fretting looking at the avant-garde art from of the head of the Kobold who got attacked by the stone.

Grasping their unguarded moment, I jumped out of bushes and rammed into them.

With the same momentum, I striked a Kobold with knee and pulverized its bones.

Furthermore, using the Kobold's shoulder as springboard, I once again jump. I landed in the center of their crowd.

There stood a single Kobold at the place of landing, I do a turning kick in air, and in a single attack smash its head.

[ET: Turning kick is roundhouse kick when on ground]

All this happened in just 5 seconds. In the blink of an eye, 3 Kobolds had been consigned to oblivion, right now, finally the other 2 Kobolds noticed my presence.

But, they have gotten too late.

1 one of the other two, while swinging the club, came at me while barking *GauGau*, let me be honest, it didn't much of a threat.

I evaded the club swung downward and attack its medulla oblongata with my elbow filled with my body weight.

It went flying towards the brushwoods. ……Though, it was dead before landing.

As for the last Kobold, the moment it tried to attack me, it had its carotid artery cut by Elk, who jumped from behind.

It was the result of losing the possibility of other enemy other than me invading them. Having the blood spurt from neck, it twitched for some seconds then stopped moving.

Elk, only after taking care of remains of Kobold and seeing no other enemy, relaxed herself.

However, she understood there was no time for resting, she catched her breath and once again took up the stance with dagger.

And one second later,

As expected, the Kobolds making up for 2nd round came out of the hut.

6 in total. What, were the people outside fewer?

And, seeing us in front of hut, they assessed us as enemies and ……

……Before they attacked, one of the Kobolds, had single red flower sprouted on its head.

Reason? the rock I had thrown before was lying near my foot once again, so I picked it up and recycled it and reused it.

For dealing with the Kobolds remaining for round 2, Elk and I kicked the ground.

Chapter 27 - Kobold and Landslide and Egg Part 2

In the end, killing them didn't even took a minute.

As expected, or rather, though they had intelligence their attacks were all monotonous, neither they used shrewd techniques, the Kobolds were attacked quickly without getting time to retaliate, and soon enough were extinct.

If we fought fair and square instead of surprise attacks, they would've retaliated somehow, but what we did were just tactics for winning. I didn't had any intention to say it was coward or whatnot, even I had to put my life on line while fighting.

And, Elk too moved quite splendidly compared to before.

It hadn't reached the level where it can be considered that she changed into a different person, but now, she could fight against several Goblins or Wolves, and finish them in around 10 minutes.

In the fight before too, she took on 2 Kobolds at the same time, and safely fought them. According to her, she was very nervous.

It must be, because she had been sparring with me every morning for the couple of these days before going outside the city or into the『Labyrinth』for hunting.

In that case, it might not be exaggerated to say she has become Rank D. The current Elk, that is.

Even so, she had grown quite a lot in these couple of days.

There must be a reason for this.

First, Elk is in no way weak. Though she had only been taught by her mom, she has techniques and thinking capabilities on that level.

Based on my opinion, at the very least in the techniques, she had already crossed the line of normal people……it must because she has some sort of talent.

But, because she lacks the basics like『Experience』and『Physical strength』, she couldn't make full use of her techniques.

In this way, the techniques she couldn't use completely, are many and stored away.

It might be because of her body constitution or hereditary genes.

Furthermore Elk's a girl. Not like I am discriminating, but basically girls have low stamina.

It might something else if she could use body enhancement magic, but that can't be done in a day or two.

Even more, Elk's fighting styles' are self-taught, she had never been taught by anyone.

So, though she could fight, there were times she didn't use techniques, basically the fighting style was unrefined.

Or maybe, she had been taught by someone but forgot most of the points she was taught. No that might be the case.

Actually, during my time of training with mom, it wasn't once or twice that she pointed out my mistakes, furthermore, all those were that I couldn't find out myself.

In that state, though you have knowledge but using it fully… to use the techniques that's quite ….. not possible.

So I thought, if she grew physically to perform the techniques learnt from her mom, and got experience to choose the best techniques for herself, then she would definitely grow strong rapidly.

The『intuition』I said before wasn't something random.

And right now, I could finally see that part.

Seeing that, I got it confirmed. That Elk would grow.

That's why, I would help her, if there comes a chance, then I would also tell her my personally-made magic - Including the ones I can't use - for her to get strong.

How should say it, but I could understand how a coach, who trains pro athlete, feels while teaching.

It sure feels damn great when something with outstanding talent in your hands, especially if the talent has peerless future.

[ET: I seriously thought has this changed into Xianxia. That line, ugh]

Of course, I would choose what magic to tell her.

With『Elemental Blood』at first, the magic which were too powerful, or shouldn't be told to others, I have no intention of telling them to her.

At any rate, the first mission with Elk has been safely completed, so we cut the proof of subjugation of Kobold, in other words it's wrists and put them in jute bag,

during the process, I suddenly noticed that the bare stones on the other side of hut were of strange shapes.

What can it be? Underneath the cliff, there were many pebbles collected……huh, was there a landslide recently?

I asked Elk,

「Who knows……Ah, but recently there earthquakes, right?」

「Yeah, you mean the one which triggered the waking up of『Naga』?」

I was still at my home, so I don't know.

「It must be that. Or this place, was originally brittle」

「……In that case, isn't it dangerous to keep the hut standing here?」

If, at the time someone lodged in the hut, the ground crumbles, and the earth below the hut crumbles, then……

「……Indeed, you have a point there. We should tell at the reception after we return to guild」

「Hahaha, we found out an unexpected problem here……Hm?」

I was looking down the cliff calmly……but, I think I saw something shine among those pebbles.

The collection of evidence was over, so I gave the bag to Elk, and tried to go there only to find something white buried among the sand and pebbles.

That ain't a rock. What is it?

I got curious, so I brushed away the surrounding sand and pebbles and take it out……

「……Egg?」

That's right, it was an egg. At least the appearance was.

However, it was big. It was about the size of a person's head. ……Is this really an egg?

Judging from the size, if it was an egg, it must be of a demon, right?

Or rather, why was this egg? buried in place like that?

Thought it was buried among quite big pebbles, but let alone a crack there ain't a single scratch on it. Did the demon (parent) who bore this egg, buried it there for some sort of camouflage?

Otherwise, did it fall down at the time of landslide?

The former aside, but it would certainly break if it was latter, right? Yeah definitely , it

would.

No, even the former will break it. What if this got deserted at a place like this?

I got curious, and tapped it with my fist. It was pretty hard.

Though that was hard, but I couldn’t possibly try to see how much hard that thing was, for the time being, I would put taking out conclusion on hold.

At that time,

SFX:Pitter,

「「Eh? 」」

☆☆☆

1 minute later,

I and Elk were resting in the hut we recovered after defeating the Kobolds.

The reason was simple. Outside rain was falling down as though someone toppled over a bucket.

That rain which started with『Pitter』then went onto『Pitter Patter』,『Piiiitttteeerrr Patttteeerrr』and finally changed into『Zwoooosh~~!!』was enough to make us understand that we couldn’t descend the mountain.

[ET: Zwoooosh~~!! is like the sound that comes when standing near (below?) the waterfall]

I had known that weather at mountains changes easily, but does it change this rapidly to make unexpectedly strong rain precipitate?

Anyhow, right now we could only wait for rain to stop.

It could be dangerous to walk the mountain road in this rain. Visibility too has gotten worse.

Furthermore, the road to reach the mountain road was an woodland road, so there were chances that we could slip.

And, if the place we slipped to was a cliff, the it would disastrous. This works even more for Elk. In my case I would probably get lost.

Though Elk remembers the way back, but it would be bad to go in this rain, so we had decided to wait till the rain stops.

☆☆☆

However,

The rain never stopped, many hours passed, it finally changed into night,

We judged it would be impossible to descend today, so we decided to rest in the hut.

Fortunately, this place was a lodging house before, so there were sleeping bags.

Similarly, we ate jerky we prepared for emergency uses at dinner time because the preserved food for emergency which was in hut had already been eaten by those damn Kobolds.

Night had always been for sleeping,

But vigilance was needed in night for demons, and it would be scary if a landslide occurred.

And so, we decided that one person would watch for the time other person would sleep.

The first half of night Elk kept watch while I slept, the latter I kept watch while Elk slept.

Then, at dawn,

When the east side of sky was getting somewhat bright,

We were taking breakfast of jerky and some cheese found in the hut, of course, maybe because we had been up all time that food didn’t satisfy our hunger……

……At that moment,

SFX: Crack!

「Hm?」

The egg I brought back without thinking anything yesterday, kept in the corner of my view……made a sound like that.

Chapter 28 - That Owl Likes Magical Food

「……And so, it born just some moments ago」

「……I thought it had gotten noisy, so this was the reason」

Elk says while her eyes were still half-opened. She looked sleepy.

No wonder. Most probably the moment she went in deep sleep, she was woken up by the first cry of this guy.

Piiiii! This baby bird had been crying happily.

The egg I picked up from among the pebbles on the outside, bore this baby bird who was perched on my right shoulder and was looking here and there.

It looked like an owl with black and grey feathers.

However, it wasn't a normal animal, I think it must be a demon.

After all it was just born but it had more than 20 cm tall body.

The size seemed too much for a baby bird. Its eyes too were opened from the time he was born.

It even had all the feathers grown. They were somewhat dishevelled at the time it came out of egg, but now they too are completely dry and fixed.

Well, considering the size of egg this must be normal, even so……

Piiiii! Piiiiii! (flatter flatter flatter!)

Holy shit it had already started flying. This bird has many things since birth.

It flew freely in the hut Elk and I were staying in, upon getting tired it perched on my shoulders, then rested and it once again repeats the process.

It has got quite high spirits, though it was born just now.

「Why is my shoulder being used to rest? every time」

「It saw you first after hatching out from egg, so maybe it has thought of you as its parent, right?」

Wha, sure enough that can be possible.

Certainly the birds have a habit of thinking as the first moving thing they see as their parents, or so I have heard. So that might be the reason.

No, even if it was thinking of me as parent, should it use me as the resting point?

「Apart from that, it's crying is noisy, isn't it hungry or something? try feeding it?」

「Ah, at first I too thought that and……」

The rain had stopped so I had went outside, searched in the bushes and caught small insects.

During that time, this guy was crying on shoulder. The damage to my eardrums ain't no joke.

I have trained and enhanced my body, so my hearing ability was also better than other humans, so yeah that damn hurts like hell. And still, near the ears this guy continually kept on his Pii Pii Pii Pii Piii……

But, the insects I captured suffering all that, this guy, for some reason, didn't even look at them.

I caught various like grasshoppers, earthworms, ants, caterpillars, but this guy ignored each and every of them.

I thought it must be that it didn't want to eat hard things right after being born, so I

gave them after crushing them but it too didn't work.

……In fact, judging from the size of its body, it wouldn't be bad because of hardness.

Having said that, if this guy didn't eat anything, no wonder it would die of starvation right after being born. It would indeed make my morning bad.

Just what would this guy eat?

It couldn't be helped, so I opened the backpack and took out everything edible and presented it.

Then the baby bird moved as though it had found something,

It flew towards the『Core』of Slime we picked up yesterday. Towards it which had fallen quite a distance far due to taking out everything from the backpack.

Just like that, it skillfully holding the core with the claw of its legs, started eating by pecking at it with the beak.

Eh, What, does it like that?

Though it was inexpensive, but it can be converted into money, so Elk make a face saying『Ahhh!』,but well……we can just take it once again.

It had been hungry as it finished one whole core in some minutes, and this time,

「Wai……No!? No, you can't eat that!!」

Elk, in hurry, gathered all the cores, so this time it looked at……once again not the food but the『Magic Restoration Pill』which we bought for emergencies.

It was tablet type of medicine, it was made from medicinal plants. Downing it would recover - or rather, it would supplement - small amount of magical power. Quite an expensive item.

Baby bird looked Elk with eyes full of hate because she picked it up.

No, even I don't think it would be good to the medicine……

……Wait a bit?

Come to think of it, the『Core of Slimes』have a small amount of magical power left in them even after the slime dies, so it had been used a lot in medicinal recipes.

That's why, defeating a slime using magic was considered ideal rather than hurting the core.

In other words, this guy……

☆☆☆

Was the same as I had thought.

This guy liked to eat anything with magical power inside, or maybe, it could only those things.

I don't know if this would be only for the baby period or it would continue even after growing up.

Actually currently, it was eating the medicinal plants with magical power in them, which Elk collected yesterday. Once again by skillfully using its legs and biting off little by little.

Elk also consented to let it eat, after all selling these medicinal plants wouldn't have given much in return.

「Even so, is this, a demon?」

「Maybe it is a demon living in this area? Elk, have you never seen something like this」

「I basically keep checking the list of demons in Ritoras Mountains, but I have neither saw or heard about a demon like this. Even more, a demon who likes magical power……」

She said, that demons like that do exist, but not in this area.

In fact, she didn't even know of a demon who looked like a black owl.

It was an egg when we found it, so maybe it was brought here from some other region?

As for that egg, I checked the wreckage of the shell, it was hard.

Not only hard, it was fucking really hard.

I took a relatively large piece of it, tried to break it by using putting power in my punch, but it didn't break, oh fuck it, there wasn't even a crack, almost no signs of any transformation on it.

Looks like the egg wasn't buried there, but it came there along with the dirt and sand. It makes sense with this damn hardness.

Even the attacks from Elk's dagger gave at most only some scratches, unless I punched with quite more power it didn't break. You know this, this is more harder than steel.

Just how did this guy came out of that shell.

It finished eating, and had been on my shoulders for a while, but I couldn't even the ridiculous power from the claws on my shoulder.

Then, leaving me the work of tidying up the hut, Elk finally came back after surveying the surroundings. Along with a troublesome report.

What? Well, due to the rain yesterday, a landslide occurred.

It wasn't near the hut, so we didn't had to feel any danger, but do to that the road to going back completely collapsed.

Flat levelled trees, crumbling land, yeah seems pretty terrible.

The scene only stretches, if we tried to pass by there the land collapse at any time, so we couldn't use that place to go back.

That's why, we now had to find a new way back.

According to Elk, there were 3 roads to go to the bottom of mountain.

One of them was the ones which got into party with landslide.

One of the rest 2, goes in between the woods, it has quite a lot of slopes, moreover the ground was muddy, so equally dangerous.

I would be fine, but the same couldn't be said for Elk. It wouldn't be good if she tripped, and neither can I carry her on my back on a slope.

The last one was quite a roundabout route, but it was slightly-sloping, but there wasn't any terrain related dangers, neither can one trip even with the muddy ground.

However in that case, we would be out of Ritoras Mountains en route.

And we would have cross another place to come back.

And name too……『Crimson Forest』

The leaves of the trees, all year have the red color like that of autumn leaves, so it got its name.

That place has more higher level and frequency of demon appearances compared to Ritoras Mountains, so that place was dangerous area in that sort of meaning.

Even so, the danger levels were the same as that of『Labyrinth of Naga』unless we tread in too deep, furthermore Elk and I have already to completed the exploration of『Labyrinth』to the lowest floor.

And so, we choose the route via Crimson Forest, with safe terrain, not so safe demons for adding up the experience.

……Furthermore, the owl came with us as though it was natural, it perched on my

shoulder and sometimes flew here and there.

☆☆☆

In reality, the Crimson Forest had more demons, and also felt like a place with more danger than there.

In Ritoras Mountain, 2 or 3 demons would come out within an hour or so, but here even at most within 10 minutes numerous demons appear.

And, though they didn't had much difference. the demons that came out had more high levels compared to the guys in the mountain.

Of course, it wasn't even enough fo us to break a sweat.

There was red leaves that felt like a bright autumn, it somewhat felt good seeing it. So it remains the whole year like this.

Meanwhile, in that calming place there was a single demon who assaulted.

It was the red-colored lizard『Red Lizard』.

It was slightly bigger than a『Lizard』, it had grown larger with the help of magical power inside its body, and can throw fire from the mouth.

I who was calming absentmindedly, reflexively dodged that guy who came from the shade of trees and tried to swing the heel for counter attacking.

But my aim wasn't that good, so I smashed its tail.

At that moment, maybe it knew it can't win against me, so it literally cut the tail and ran off.

The scales of red lizard can be used as materials in producing ornaments, so it was little disappointing. I need to be on guard. Elk too warned me.

As for the left behind tail was also quite big considering the size of red lizard. It was about the size of a root vegetable.

And, naturally there was magical power left in the tail, so……

「How is it? Good?」

PiiIIIIIIIIiiiiiiiiiiiIIIIIII!

Just like before, I presented it to this guy. This time it was little big so I cut it in proper sizes with the help of knife.

No, it wouldn't be good to go back with only a tail. So yeah, to not feel embarrassment and for this guy to fill its stomach.

The baby bird, as expected skillfully……(omitted).

It was little but it seemed to use the legs, claws and beak a little more skillfully than before. This guy surely grows fast.

And surprisingly, it even ate the whole tail which should of the same volume as it. Just where the hell did it enter into!?

Demons are strange……there are still quite a lot of thing I don't know of, yet.

Now that I think about it, I've been calling it, 'it', 'this guy', 'baby bird', but……yeah that sure can be tiring.

Furthermore, don't you feel sorry for it that it doesn't even have a name even after being born. I'm calling it baby bird, in human language it might be something like『Brat』or『Lil' Lad』.

And so, I have given it a name『Alva』

For a test I tried to call it, it seemed happy, after play-biting my ears it flew overhead and did a revolution. Yeah Yeah, it's good that you like it.

In fact, though this came late, but this guy is really cute.

I suddenly realized that the sound of wings flapping stopped.

Just like in my previous world, the owls don’t make sounds while flying, and can catch their prey while flying in the darkness, just like assassin.

So it reached that level in only a hour and some minutes from birth. You’re good to go, Alva.

「……Sigh, you completely look like you want to keep it. Well, the moment you gave food to it, you got recognized as the parent……」

Elk sighed on my curiousity and whim. I’m really sorry.

Chapter 29 - Encounter with Guards

Danger area of rank D『Crimson Forest』.

The demons which appeared were not much different from the ones inside the labyrinth. In fact, their levels were low but they come out in large numbers, so it was annoying.

Well, it wasn't like they always attacked even if we happened to come across them, ignoring the small demons generally more would immediately leave to some place. Even then numbers ain't low,

we weren't killing every one of them, but mostly we kill one of them and let others run in fright. Most run with just that.

Frankly, fighting each and every one of them would be troublesome. Once again, the numbers ain't low.

And……there are many demons in this forest which I hesitate to kill.

Rabbit with horns『Horn Rabbit』or squirrel about the size of a puppy『Trifartel』 …… there are many demons who are cute. They would be on the level one would keep on staring them if they were to be sold in a pet shop.

If you want to laugh then laugh. Even though I'm like this, I love cute, since the previous life. Plush toys too.

However, a part of the demons were exceptions. I'm hunting them proactively.

Like the demons whose raw materials can be sold for high prices, or those who can used as a meat and were needed.

In my case, my policy was to tear the needed parts of demons, those which can be eaten would be used as food.

As an example,『Ignite Boar』is a pig-like carnivorous brutal demon. Its meat could be considered as a high-grade item, so good to eat, good for sale, that sort of monster it was.

There were also like a large sized chicken『Big Cook』and a completely bear like demon, and the name too『Bear』.

……That goes for the demons on raw materials basis, as for those with expensive fur like『Trifartel』, it was being hunted by Elk proactively, so I can't get used to them dying.

Well I have my backpack, so after hunting the demons we put the materials into it, I don't think we would have a problem in walking due to excess of raw materials.

But I still have to take care to not take too much. I have no intention to greedily take raw materials in large quantity, and I more enough don't want it to become a racket if I brought raw materials in large quantities to the Guild.

Even if I『Store』it as food, the time couldn't be stopped, by time its condition would only worsen.

And, I also hunted demons with magical power. They would become the food of Alva.

Just like the『Red Lizard』from before, we met with a『Magic Bunny』only once but it was really impressive (it was realllyyy cute).

Its appearance wasn't much different from that of a rabbit, but making small sounds……it fired of a fireball like magic, at that time I was really surprised.

I got surprised, striked the fireball with backhand blow, in between that time Elk killed it by throwing the knife.

He had a scent of more dense magic compared to other demons, but for it to suddenly use magic. ……How enviable.

Later, Elk told me it was a rank『D』demon, and it could defeat『Bear』, something much times bigger that it itself. Hearing that, I was even more surprised.

As for that『Magic Bunny』, it had more magical power, so as expected it became the food for Alva.

Up until now, we met only one of them.

Alva ate it the moment I presented it. If it wants to it eats.

The appetite couldn't be considered as something for someone as small as this.

The『Magic Bunny』I just now talked about was eaten completely except the bones.

It was 2 times larger than normal rabbits, and obviously lot more bigger than Alva itself……was it digesting using magic?

Then, after digestion and absorption was over, it flew to quite a distance and did it that work……after that it came back to my shoulder. Yeah, this guy has got good brain. It's good that I don't have to deal with aftermath.

It relaxed after eating, right now, it was sleeping on my shoulder. Was eating and sleeping the same in infants of both animals and demons?

Incidentally, This thing had been on my mind for a while,

The demons of this forest, maybe my imagination, but most are agitated……?

Perhaps, again something else came out?

「What do you mean by something?」

「Well something like『Naga』, after all all the demons are agitated and too much worked up as if wanting to secure food, maybe a strong demon came out that can destroy the balance of ecosystem」

Something like, an ancient sleeping demon woke up due to landslide.

「Give me a little break……I don't want to meet something like that every time」

Maybe it had turned into a trauma, Elk started. Cold sweat sprouts.

No, well, I didn't feel that they were starving or thin, so I don't think there would be something like that……

However in that case, I have no idea what it might be……

I tried to ask Elk before, she said normally, even if the danger level rank was D, there hasn't been a time this many demons would come across by.

Though the demons were in lot of numbers, there's those who are coward, and careful, so upon sensing humans they would themselves disperse.

And, there were majority of them who would attack on their own, now that's suspicious.

If it was like in the『Labyrinth』like food shortage I could understand the reason, but I couldn't feel anything like that, so it had been in my mind even more deeply.

In other words, for some reason, they had been agitated and turned brutal, so they're right now in high state?

Mating season……it doesn't seem like that. According to Elk, it doesn't occur this season.

Don't tell me, the demons of forest have made a united front and were going to attack the human habitations……no no no, though they are demons most of them are wild animals. They wouldn't be hostile to humans only. They aren't some army of some demon king.

But in that case, it becomes more complicated to understand……

While thinking that we briskly walked.

In an irregular place like this, Elk could still calculate and find the way back using

map and sun, she's really excellent……

——!! ——!!

……Hm?

I think I heard something just now……?

At that moment,

Not only me, but sleeping Alva too got startled and woke up, then raised its head up.

We both looked around here and there……in the end we stopped while looking at the same direction.

「Oh, Alva you too noticed it?」

SFX: *Piiiii!*

「? What happened, you guys?」

Elk walked some steps, noticed something and turned back……the next moment,

SFX: *Hyuuuu!* *Pashiii!!* (*whistle* *strike*)

Something - an arrow - so an arrow, came flying at me crossing through the trees, so I tried to catch it with my hand.

Not like it would hit something or someone even if it kept flying in that trajectory.

As though the momentum if came flying can be understood, the arrow hit my arm making a *Piiin* sound and wavered, seeing that Elk started then a second later she understood the whole situation.

Then, in a fluster, I looked towards the place arrow came flying in from, there was no one.

「Minato, is there something!?」

「……Well, if you ask there is something then yes there is, but……」

Most probably, Elk thought it was an attack from some demon with intelligence and can use weapons like Kobold from yesterday or Goblins from『Labyrinth』. She took out the dagger and took a fighting stance.

But that might be wrong. From what she had heard.

I tell her『It's fine』while holding her back with my hand.

「Probably, we weren't getting aimed at.」

「……? What do you mean?」

Ah well, it was quite far……so Elk can't hear it.

In this forest, there were cries of demons here and there, so it had been noisy.

As for what my ear heard were……battle sounds.

The sound of something getting cut by a sword.

The sound of something attacking a metallic armor or something.

The sound of air cutting mostly because arrows are flying.

And……the sound of demons' crying and humans' voices.

But, the voices of humans' wasn't something like scream. It was more like, angry voice? commanding voice? At any rate, it wasn't a voice that seemed to be afraid from demons……

In that case this arrow was a stray arrow. Now this is really dangerous.

「In other words, someone is getting attacked by demons?」

「It's not one-sided, looks like they're putting up a fight? I can't hear screams. And it's not necessary that there are only 1 or 2 people」

From what I heard, approximately, 10 are present. I couldn't deduce exactly the numbers because there was a quite a distance between us.

「So, is it an adventurer party? Or is it a trader group with escorts?」

「Who know. What will you do? Wanna see?」

「……Not really, I have no interest in getting involved with other people's problems……」

glance She sees the map in her hand,

「From here it is quite far. Helping them is something else, but let's go and see what's happening」

「Understood」

We change the route, not like we couldn't take a detour but it would be troublesome to walk more.

And, seems like they were having hard time, so it would good to not take a detour so I could save them when needed.

☆☆☆

The stray arrows could again come flying, so for precautions, I walked in front while Elk behind me.

Sure enough, 2 or 3 came, so I broke them or catched and kept on our progress.

The arrows I catched were stored in the backpack because it seemed to be too wasteful to throw them.

Then, after passing through the trees, we finally reached the mountain road where the sounds were coming fr……Whoops! (Pashi), once again it came flying.

Then, what I saw on the other side after catching it was……

「……!? Reinforcement……no, humans, eh?」

A woman holding a bow while looking at us with a surprised expression.

And in her surroundings,

Just like I heard, there were 10 and some more people.

Everyone had weapons in hand and were fighting the demons attacking them from inside the forest.

There were some carriages too, they were fighting while covering them, it doesn't seem like a trader group to me.

Why? Because the attire of all them was same.

And it wasn't only normally matching. It looked like a military or naval uniform. They are wearing an armor, all have the same design. Including the woman too.

They seem more like Knights compared to adventurers?

Then, after a second, the startled woman, quickly,

「……Oi, the young man over there!」

「Eh, Yes!?」

「You're an adventurer, right? There is danger here, quickly……!」

The woman stopped talking, took her stance with bow and nocked the arrow.

Then, aiming at our side……Wha, Wait!?

I took defensive posture for an instant, but the arrow didn't reach us, but went by our side and pierced the temple of『Wolf』hiding in the shade of tree behind us.

Whoa, awesome. She's fast to take stance and shoot.

That bow and arrow using woman, takes a breath then once again looks at us,

「I'm sorry for scaring you. Young man and oh, there is one more. I'm sorry to ask it immediately, but are you adventurer or something? 」

「Eh? Ah, Yes, well we are」

「I see. Sorry for the rude behaviour, but just as you see en route we……!」

While saying that she once again takes down another demon with her certain archery.

「If you haven't lost the way, then I will recommend to get out from here quickly. The situation is quite dire. If you remain here it would dangerous for you too」

「Err, what about you all?」

「Just as you see. I'm sorry, but we can't protect *you both in this situation」

[ET: She says Kikou (貴公), this is used by MALES to refer to equal or inferior (in age) males]

No, I don't think I understood anything at all by looking.

Then, before she spoke her words,

Her companion fighting at a separate place shouted in panic.

「Captain! There are reinforcements near 10 o'clock! Wolf and……Bear and Red Lizard too!」

「Ku, again! The smell of blood is stimulating them and luring them, eh……It's inevitable, everyone……!? Oi moron, behind you!」

The woman shouted, the man who just now called her『Captain』, had a wolf coming at him from behind.

But, before that『moron』man noticed it, ……the arrow I threw struck the eye of wolf. The one I catched some moments ago.

Yeah, even now I can not leave someone who is about to get hurt. No matter what.

The wolf stopped there, but it started rampaging there, so there could've been casualties for the Knights (?), so I stepped the ground to reach there and kicked it.

The kick sent it flying to the opposite side of bushes, no, grove of trees.

The bow and arrow using woman and others saw everything that happened in that second in mute amazement.

「Err……was meddlesome for you?」

「……No, you helped us, thank you」

The bow and arrow using woman gave the words of gratitude after being the first one to understand the situation.

「And young man, though I said to run, but can you try to meddle some more? You have some ability, frankly, we don't have much composure right now」

「Eh, yes, if that's the case. Elk, you fine with it?」

「Yeah, I'm fine. It's not like I didn't predict this. Finish it quickly, okay?」

「Understood ma'am. Ah, that's right, Alva it will be dangerous so be with Elk」

Piiiiii!

I confirmed that Alva landed on the shoulder of Elk.

That Elk was in an non-aggressive defense stance with her back facing a carriage. Yeah, in the current situation that might be the correct choice.

I strike the gauntlets of both hands and faced the『reinforcements』the knights (temporary) were saying before. Whoa, sure enough, they are quite a lot.

……Well, it would be a good warm-up.

So now that I'm participating in battle here, I would have to perceive this group as my comrades, right.

I don't like my comrades being hurt, so to finish the warm-up, I kicked the ground.

☆☆☆

After some ten-odd minutes,

We succeeded in somehow repelling that crowd of demons.

While letting the knights protecting, the carriage was moving away from that place.

We were able to get them away by the plan of me and other knights including the bow and arrow using woman to kill the monsters chasing us.

It wasn't exactly repelling, right? We too ran away.

And, right now we both were sitting while facing the bow and arrow using woman inside a carriage of the group.

「Well then……first let me thank you. We were saved after all」

「Ah, no, we were just passing by, you don't have to worry about it」

「Though I'm grateful that you say that, but thanks to you the casualties to my squad was less, so I can't accept your words. Right now, I can only bow down my head」

She bows her head, seems like, she was the captain of this group.

The way she was letting out that air, and bowing her head in a place like this, I had a good first impression of her.

And, here finally I could see her clearly.

She has somewhat short light blue hair, and an easy-to-move blue colored navy uniform.

Maybe she had matched the armor with her clothes and it too was of blue-violet color, it was a light armor just like Elk's one. The design was more for not interfering with agility and not more for defense

「I haven't introduced myself yet. I'm Suura Cowen. I'm the platoon leader of the city guard force stationed near here. They are my subordinates」

City guard force……ah, the police-like thing that came in the case with Elk.

For short『Guards』. Though they are counted as a part of country's army, but they are more like police boxes responsible for problems happening near the citizens living place.

To put it simply, the difference is like that of police and army?

Well in emergencies they too fight along with army, so they were considered as a full-fledged army link.

And, this Suura-san seems to be the『Platoon leader』in the base near here.

She lead a troop for a mission, then the situation changed into what it was before and seemed to have a close fight.

And, we by coincidence were passing by.

「It would've been dangerous at that rate. Though we wouldn't had lost, but not everyone would have been fine. You really saved us」

「Ah, no, it's fine as long as everyone is fine」

I reply with a nod seeing Suura-san bowing her head again, at the same time, I finish our self-introduction.

「……Now, let's change the topic, you both are adventurers, right, what was the reason you came in this forest? 」

「Ah, no it's not like we had some reason to come in this forest……」

I told her, us coming from Ritoras Mountain, and were taking a detour route to return back to city. All in a summary.

Then, Suura-san slightly furrowed her brows.

「It's unfortunate but you won't be able to reach your destination on this carriage. We are heading deep into forest after all」

「Eh, is that true?」

「Yeah, strictly speaking……『We have go deep inside the forest』or else we won't reach

our destination」

I don’t get it clearly, but it seems like that.

Muu……I was thinking that they would let us get out of forest in the carriage for helping them, but not everything in life goes easily well.

But in that case, we should now leave them.

We were only outsiders, and will only be hindrance to Suura-san in her mission.

I tell Suura-san that we would leaving here.

「I see, understood. I still want to thank you, but I’m in midst of work, so you know. It’s painful but I have nothing to give to you two」

「Ah, please don’t. I’ll just take the grateful feelings」

「I see. Then……before that」

Then Suura-san opened a map in front of us as though she remembered something.

What is it , while thinking that we both look, Suura-san then points at a point with her fair clean finger.

……Elk, I leave it up to you.

「Are you both going via this route to outside?」

「Yes, is there a problem?」

「Yeah. In truth……because of the heavy rain yesterday, the whole terrain around this area has crumbled. Due to that, this south road is mostly blocked」

……geh, for true?

The area Suura-san pointed with her finger also covered the route Elk had said to walk on.

……We couldn’t get through there. For the same reason we took a detour from Ritoras Mountain.

Suura-san, left the base early morning, couldn’t use that route, so took a really roundabout route and had then reached here.

We were told about the route, but yeah, it surely has quite a large distance to cover.

And we were able to know the reason behind the agitation of demons of forest, it was because of landslide.

Though it was only in an area, but the landslide changed the terrain of that place, so the demon ruling that territory was agitated. It lost the territory in a single night, so due to that the demons moved for recovering it, but didn’t stop and started to expand their territory, therefore the southern side of forest was in a rebellion state for now.

It couldn’t complain the natural phenomenon, so it came to this point.

In that case, for some time, this forest would be really troublesome.

Normally too the numbers and types of demons here were more, and in this state it would be more bad. Including the fact I would have to take a detour, it would turn into a difficult road back to city.

「What will you do, Elk」

「What you mean what to do, this is the only way back, so we have to go on this route」

Sure enough……

「……By the way, I have single suggestion」

Suura-san opened her mouth with a difficult to speak expression. What happened?

「Can you both accompany us, only if you feel like it?」

「? What do you mean by that?」

「Just like I said before. We are currently headed deep in the forest for our mission, so it's quite uneasy because the demons would also be stronger. That is little miserable, you might have guessed it from the battle before」

「Ah, I see」

「Furthermore in this『Crimson Forest』the outer areas have low ranked demons but after entering a little inside their ranks jump the gun and rapidly increase. The current us……well, we won't be annihilated but we surely wouldn't be able to come back without anyone getting hurt」

「I had heard that the people affiliated to Royal Army's lowest strata have been employed as『Guards』……」

「Yeah. That's why the lack of strength is also one of the reason」

There, Suura-san spoke.

Though they were low leveled demons like『Wolf』and『Red Lizard』, but I was beatin the crap out of them barehandedly and Elk too fought against them with movements not at all inferior to Knights.

So she wants to hire us as adventurers to aid the squad temporarily.

「Of course, I would reward you later. Though it won't be as far as giving all, but I do plan to give you the reward from my private funds too」

「Wouldn't it be better to go back temporarily and replenish the war potential?」

Elk spoke up.

Completely right. Doing that would be more good than hiring adventurers like us who have unknown origins.

And didn't they used too many arrows in the previous battle? they should replenish it too.

「……Indeed, normally I would've done that. But we don't have timewise composure to do that」

「What do you mean?」

「The mission this time is to rescue. We can't take more time」

Ah, so that's how it was.

From what I heard, yesterday, a caravan of traders was deployed from『Volca』piled with some important commodity, but they didn't reach the neighbouring city they were to reach in night.

From investigating, it was guessed that they took the path via『Crimson Forest』as a shortcut route, but en route the heavy rain came and they were stranded here.

They would be on the woodland path, and would be found out without taking time, or so was their speculation, but due to the change in terrain because of landslide and the agitated state of demons had changed it.

Because of the situation within forest they wanted to replenish the consumable goods like like arrow and all, but they couldn't possibly make the target for protection wait for long in the forest.

Moreover in doing that they would have to take that roundabout route. If they went back, then coming back today would be impossible. Based on time, the survival rate of traders would be grim.

And so, she asked us to help her, after all we came like a godsend to them.

「And it's not like I don't know you.」

「?」

「Due to my position, I have a good eye to discern people, just like from the skill you showed in the previous battle and especially, ……Minato, right, you even stopped my

arrow from point-blank range, didn't you?」

Regarding that Suura-san apologized.

Well indeed, normal people wouldn't be able to catch an arrow. So she also evaluated that point too.

「And you don't even demand money for helping and just tried to get away from here, that's an unselfish personality. Having seen that much, I know that I can somewhat trust you」

Suura-san said that along with a gentle smile.

「So what will you do? I will say again, that I will pay the reward completely. It's including my subordinates with promising future. Although it's miserable as a soldier, but stomach can't become spine. ……can't you please accompany us?」

Suura-san asked with gentle yet serious eyes.

……Ah, what should I do……

I'm happy that she praised me. But in that case it would be……

It didn't look like she was lying, so Suura-san would clearly pay the reward. For the amount of trouble it would bring us also.

Even so, we would have to bear the responsibility of going in the dangerous『forest』without any preparations.

And, the tactics based on pros and cons based on the area were something I'm not good at or rather……

……Elk, all up to you

「How long would be the time period for this job?」

「It will be like……searching for traders group, then escort them to the city, so at fast it would be over by tomorrow. At most it would be 5 days. Of course, that would be the timit limit for exploration」

「……Minato, you can make ice and all?」

「? Well, it's not like I can't do it, why?」

More precisely, I don't make it with magic immediately, but use『Magic Arts』to freeze the moisture in atmosphere to make ice.

But, what happened suddenly?

「I mean the wrists of Kobolds for subjugation proofs, we can't let it rot away, right? Upon freezing, it should be able to keep the shape for some days」

「? You were in the middle of quest?」

「Yeah. We have to present the proofs of subjugation within one week」

Saying that, ELk showed the wrists of Kobold to Suura-san.

「I see. In that case, we have preservatives within our equipments, you can use it. If it's a simple thing then it would be able to preserve for 2 weeks」

「Really? You have got a quite convenient thing there?」

「Yeah. Due to my work, I have to bring back the wrists of robbers too. Regardless of missions, upon expeditions I bring it for preserving some things」

Unexpectedly, we were told her work quite vividly.

Well, like that the wrists would be preserved.

The time limit for request reached『At most 5 days』, so it might be safe at borderline.

In the worst case, after days, the exploration gets cancelled, we both withdraw, and I run with Elk on back in hyper speed.

「How about we act as mediators for the time limit of quest. Of course, for the time you would be here, we will prepare the food. But, upon increase in numbers we would

have some local procurement, please acknowledge it……」

「And for other facilities?」

「The sleeping place, huh. Either inside the carriage, or we have 2 tents prepared, you can choose any one」

「Contents of work? Are we needed to only aid during the time of battle?」

「Basically yes. If I ask to be more greedy, I would like you to help in exploration, and setting up the camping grounds……Ah of course, I would increase the reward taking that in consideration」

「I see. ……I need a rough sketch about the amount of money given as reward, can I ask it?」

「You're right……for the time being, how about 50 silver coins?」

「T-That much!?」

In Japanese yen it would be……500K yen!? Really!? I would get that much for just escorting for 4 or 5 days.

「……Isn't this quite lavish?」

「It isn't. The place we are going is the deepest part of『Crimson Forest』where the danger level are lot more. According to situation, I would increase the reward」

Hearing that, Elk thought for a while……

「……Understood. Minato, you fine with it?」

「You accepting it?」

「Yeah. Looking at other conditions, this is cost-effective. And thinking about future, this would have help us get experience for quests like this」

Well yeah.

With this work we should be able to get a lot of experience for escorting quest.

Adding that, we would get extraordinary reward, so it would be good to accept it.

After that I left the negotiations to Elk, completed the detailed facts, and officially accepted the quest by Suura-san.

It was a normal quest, but before I knew it, it had upgraded……well just think of it as life experience.

Chapter 30 – Girls' Talk on the Riverside

Few hours after going with Suura-san and the guards,

We were able to find the『Trader Group』, our goal, quite quickly.

Well, just like Suura-san thought, they were on the woodland path, moreover, I too was using my enhanced hearing ability to search.

Then, after searching for an hour, I heard some sounds seeming like a quarrel, we went there and bingo, we found them.

Incidentally, the traders we secured were together with adventurers they had hired in Volca as escorts, and those adventurers are……

「Well, it is a coincidence. For being able to meet you two again after tomorrow and in this place」

「……err, Zari-san, right? Well, you're right in a sense」

「Don't add『san』, just call me Zari without any honorifics. It's not like we don't know each other, right?」

No, I seriously think if that conversation which didn't even last more than some minutes is enough to put me in the『Acquaintance』category.

Yeah. The『Escorts』were Zari and other two delinquent adventurer who made a fuss near the『Board』in the guild yesterday.

Just when I thought I have secured the Trader Group, something strange came as free product……that really surprised me, seriously.

Among them, this flashy guy, Zari came in the same as our carriage saying the more the merrier.

As for the remaining two……the obese guy and gorilla-macho-man who were aiming for Elk yesterday.

「Like I said, this is da necessary expenses, right? So don't be stingy about it, mister richy trader」

「If we don't use our power, we won't be able to protect ya treasure, right?」

「Stop fucking around! Where do you see escorts who lays hand on the commodities they are required to protect!!」

Good grief, they're still at it.

Apparently, the two were hired as escorts, but their behaviour was exactly like delinquents.

From what I heard, before we rescued them, these two laid hands on the commodity the trader was carrying……no, aren't I repeating what they just said.

「Aww, at that rate we would be getting complained upon reaching the city. We don't even have accomplished the request, now we would have to give penalty, fine」

「Didn't you had wrong people to work with?」

「Ahaha, you're strict~……」

Hearing the prickly lines of Elk, the flashy man laughs it off without paying attention to it.

Apparently they really met some days earlier and tried to take up on a request together. Though it might be wrong to say it……but this guy got the losing lottery ticket.

However, upon talking like this, the air around this Zari, surely is frivolous……but not

irritating unlike those two.

At the very least, he isn't someone one would want to avoid based on his appearance. I don't feel indecent stares toward Elk or Suura-san, but neither does he keep much distance between them and him.

As if he noticed, he suddenly looked towards me,

「Ah, that's right. Hey, boyfriend-kun」

And said something like that to me.

At that time, hearing『Boyfriend』, Elk turned red in an instant, but because it was really cute, so I didn't retort.

「I forgot to ask yesterday, but……you're that, right? The adventurer in black, the one who defeated『Naga』」

「AH……you can tell? Really?」

「Well yeah, that's your appearance after all. When I first saw you, I thought you were a crow」

……Don't you have good examples other than that.

But well how to put it, he is unexpectedly fun guy to talk with, so along with Zari and other three adventurers too, our travel went comparatively happily.

Leaving the moving to coachman and horse, we just relaxed and talked.

Only sometimes did demons attack, it was alright to just handle them suitably.

Perhaps due to more people, the demons who attacked became low.

Then that time continued for some while, now it was time for sun to set down.

Normally thinking it was dangerous to move forward in night, so we decided to put up a camp near this area, and we all begin preparing the camping ground.

The night of that day, we had a barbeque party with the dry preserved foods brought by the Knights and the edible animals (demons too) we hunted for procuring more food.

Due to the situation, they had only brought simple plain foods, so when I brought two bears, everyone got delighted.

I was holding one in each hand, so I thought they would be taken aback, but on the contrary I was praised and even got my back struck violently. It sure is great, the people who are straightforward and don't make fuss about everything. Though, it is indeed stifling.

At that time, I encountered some slimes and red lizards, so I hunted them down and gave them to Alva.

☆☆☆

That night,

I woke up, moreover wide-awake and couldn't go back to sleep.

I couldn't sleep at all, so I thought to wash my face for relaxing, and I headed to the river we found in the vicinity.

I speak with the guards on duty for night and left the camping grounds.

The night watch is being done by Knights in shifts.

At first I suggested that I should too go night watch, but Suura-san said me to rest in night, I had helped her fight and also brought wonderful food.

She kindly told me and I accepted her words. To cover up for it, I would work hard in morning.

After reaching the river, I washed my face by splashing the water which felt cold because there was no sunlight unlike daytime. And it feels really good on this body

which hasn’t gone in bath for last two days.

……But, now I feel that I’m more awake than before for no reason at all.

In my case, after washing my face like this, I would be able to sleep after a while even if I’m not feeling sleepy right now.

Looking at the position of the moon and all, I finally realised it was going to be dawn pretty soon.

At this rate, it would be good to be awake. And I don’t feel any lack of sleep.

It’s like this, should I also catch some ingredients to add in the breakfast.

It was some minutes later, Elk arrived.

I was『catching』big fishes, because I had many small ones, at that time, I heard footsteps of someone approaching from behind the brushwoods.

I turn back and Elk came out of there holding a large towel.

「……Breakfast?」

「Yeah. Meat will be too much heavy in the morning, and I also ate that yesterday, so I thought fish would be good. Well it is only secondary job after washing my face」

「I get it, but……you catch fish in quite an interesting way」

「Interesting, is it?」

「Surely. From what I know, the only ones who catch fish that way are you and bears」

Ah, well, I also think that this way does seem like the way bears hunt salmon in Hokkaido, by slapping the swimming fish and throwing it to the riverside.

But, I hate luring them with fishing pole. Because I hate waiting and being patient.

This way is more quick and reliable.

And, for not letting the fishes get injured, I’m scooping them out gently, so their condition too is good.

「And how are you able to stand on water? Magic?」

「No, this is that……surface tension, never heard of it? Like gerridae」

[ET: Gerridae is the family of insects like water striders or pond skaters. Basically, they have the power to play freely on water without any magic, chakra, or ninja water slippers]

[AK: is only me or … reminds me of Naruto]

[ET: Even I wonder why I used that shit here and why Minato used something similar]

The technique to activate surface tension on the bottom of feet by using water magic. This too was developed during training.

Right now I can walk on the water surface and stand just like gerridae - Mom told me they exist in this world too -, and like that I can play on water.

Upon running fast the magical power on the bottom on feet would scatter, but at that time I can just run at full speed, so problem.

When I told her, a sigh came back. Sorry for being a freak.

「By the way, why are you here?」

「I am……for bathing. I hadn’t entered bath for past two days」

Saying that while hesitating, she started to undress, without even paying attention to the fact that I am in front of her.

「Ah, then I should go to other side」

「It’s fine. I’m not concerned on letting my body being seen by you after all this time……we are doing even bigger things than this after all」

Ah, well, she's right.

Since that night, I became more close with Elk, and not only stayed with her in day but also night.

Several days later,

It started when Elk said for us to be in the same room, as it would save money and we have entered a deep relationship too.

Surely she wasn't wrong. Elk came to my room many times for sorting the raw materials I hunted, or for discussing the plans for next day, sometimes, she came but didn't go back too.

The bed of the room too is pretty big for two people……like that, it went to『that sort of thing』too.

So it became to the talk of us living in same room, when we told Tanya-chan, I was made fun of with a face as though she were having fun, moreover a room with double bed was also prepared.

No, well……she's doing her work fine, so no problem.

Anyhow, everything went that way, and our distance also closed up quite a bit, more precisely, at least to the level we won't feel embarrassed on having our naked body seen by each other.

That's why, seeing Elk undressing in front of me……though not completely, but yeah, I'm not startled as much I used to before. The places I haven't seen on Elk's body, are now non-existent.

The same goes for Elk. She doesn't feel embarrassed upon having me seeing her, her recently it has gotten to point『You can stay here and keep guarding』, just like she said before.

I'm happy and unsatisfied as a man, but I can feel trust in those words, so I'm happy.

While I was thinking all that stuff, Elk has already finished undressing and started to wipe her body with a small wet towel.

The scene of Elk washing her body under the moonlight is truly fascinating, to the extent that I have already started to staring at her without blinking.

I watched her too much, so she asked『Want to enter in water together?』, but that I refused.

Though it is a fascinating invitation……but there is high possibility that I will feel remorseful later. The mental strength of boy in puberty is not strong. And it will be even weak during camping.

I even got asked『You don't want to wipe off you sweat』, but in that area, I have a trick though it won't make you feel refreshed.

What is it? It is really simple, but dangerous.

It is ignite my own body with fire, then become a fire ghost doll……and just like that burn and exhaust all the dirt and sweat. If in fire for 1 minute, all the dirt and old cuticles too fall down.

And my clothes and equipments can't be burned with flames, so laundry also is done together. The only fault is, I can't do that while indoors.

Hearing that Elk, shows a fed up, amazed and perplexed expression……and just after, while showing an expression as she remembered something,

「Hey, Minato?」

「What?」

「If I asked then would to teach me those……the convenient magics? Well, it's only after I become more good at magic by practising……」

She asked me that while hesitating a bit.

Seeing me use various types of insane but interesting original magic - I am using various others during exploration and training - , Elk too must've thought to use some of them.

Hearing that, I didn't get very flustered.

Frankly, I had known she was going to ask me that at some point.

From what I conclude, the answer is half Yes, and half No.

Elk is my partner whom I can trust in both public and private matters, so If can help her grow, then I've got no hesitation at all.

The convenience magics I am using right now, I would tell her while being happy.

Of course, just like Elk said, only after her magic has started to take form.

Due to her having the talent which I don't, she might be able to use them more greatly than me, so I'm looking forward to that.

But this only the Yes part. The No part is different.

Among the magics I have, there are those who have been referred as『Taboo』,『Not for teaching people』or『Don't use it』, which let alone teaching, even I cannot use.

There are also types which are completely banned and some are allowed with conditions attached, there are many reasons, for example the 18th one『Elemental Blood』would be dangerous largely if it is leaked to outside carelessly, so I have no intention of teaching it to any person, no matter who it is.

So, for them, though it is unfortunate, but I can't teach it to Elk either.

Of course, if Elk, after completing her training reached that realm, then at that time, if I was able to trust her completely then……yeah I don't know what I would do.

But when I told her that, Elk didn't show an expression of sadness, but revealed a smile filled with fighting spirit.

She might have gotten in high spirits thinking that she too would be able to use these interesting magic, aside forbidden ones. Well, it's good to be motivated, so no problem there.

Even I'm excited to see her use magic like me.

☆☆☆

Some minutes later,

The time when Elk almost washed her body, and I too collected too many fishes,

「……Hm?」

I sensed several presences in surrounding, immediately after, a black shadow appeared above me.

But, due to sound of wings flapping - which mostly didn't make sounds - I noticed it, and not got scared when it perched on my shoulders.

「Alva, you are awake too? ……Oh, right you're a nocturnal animal」

Well, I don't know if it is friend of owls or not.

It has grown a lot from morning, it looks more like owl and falcon mixed in one…… what the hell I'm thinking about right now.

The problem is the other presences……two, moreover both are coming from downwind.

one of them has really weak presence. As if a professional spy……to the extent I can somehow sense it due to my enhanced hearing ability and smelling sense.

But, the other one, the one without any intention to hide, appears from behind the brushwoods the moment later……ah, what.

「Oh, so there were previous guests. Minato-dono and Elk-dono」

It was Suura-san letting her blue hair flutter in morning breeze, it seemed a lot refreshing.

She isn't wearing armor, but sure is carrying her favorite set of bow and arrow.

In her other hand is a simple yet soft to touch, somewhat big towel.

Looking at her hand luggage, it seems like she too came for same work Elk did.

And Suura-san perceived it. She realizes that Elk just now finished the work she herself was going to start.

And looking at the situation more clearly, I too am at that place.

「Fumu……just like I expected, you both are not simply adventurer partners, but have more intimate relationship. It doesn't seem like you both did that here」

「Well right」

「Hahaha……I somehow beared it」

「I see. Fufu, that's sincere of you though being young」

I see , Suura-san says that and puts her hand on clothes to undress.

Ah, wait, this is going to be that, right.

「E-Elk, well then, I'm going back before」

「Oh, Minato-dono, are you going back? I don't mind if you stand there, though」

Then, Suura-san said that in manner I don't know if I should categorize it into serious or joke.

Huh, is Suura-san, more of frank type of person……liking these sort of jokes?

Well, she is living in an army of men, so maybe she isn't feeling anything upon being seen by others……so I can't possibly say『I will take that offer』, so let's get our ass out of here.

I will keep guarding from somewhere far, and Suura-san can use bow and magic so problem in safety department.

That's why,

The place, Alva is pointing and trying to get my attention towards by poking my head……the place with the other person's presence, I decide to go there.

「Then, have fun」

Saying just that, I kicked the ground.

Ah, I forgot bringing scarf and fishes. I will come back later~

☆☆☆

Immediately after Minato disappeared on the other side of brushwoods.

She……Suura, who came to bath just like Elk, undressed and entered the water holding towel in one hand.

Elk is currently naked, but because other person is also female, there isn't any need to put her guard up.

……And Suura has already seen her naked with Minato, so she isn't all that embarrassed at this point.

Before they knew, with natural flow, it started from normal chatting and turned into girls' talk.

Like troubles in the places full of men, or about having troublesome partner and subordinates……and some more idle complaints got mixed into the talk.

From that conversation, the two understood more and more about each other.

To Elk, Suura is a sincere, calm and composed, strict at times needed, and is frank person who is easy to talk with.

It seemed like Elk finally understood the reason, the subordinates accompanying them would yearn for Suura and trust her.

On the other hand, Suura too found Elk to be a stern and strong woman but kind at some points.

And also realized that she couldn't be honest to herself when given kindness by others and in turn gets angry.

Also the fact that, that young man might like her this part too.

Though they didn't found the deepest parts of each other's heart, but the talk went on causally.

「However, Minato-dono hasn't returned yet. Before, it seemed like he found some presence and went to confirm it……Elk-dono did you sense something?」

「Nope? But he has really good hearing ability, and judging from his expression before it didn't seem like he made an excuse to run」

Elk guessed it because she knows about Minato's super five senses.

「But what might it be? If it isn't demon, the thinking normally……it might be someone aiming to peep at our bodies……」

「Like those two delinquents?」

Elk recalled the face of two ill-bred adventurers she met in front of board in guild and rescued yesterday, and she knit her eyebrows.

Yesterday's night, in a drunken frenzy they called out to Elk, Suura and other females in guard troop. Naturally, everybody ignored them.

On the other hand, the frivolous Zari, didn't show any signs of that and was doing manly talk with Minato. Just, like Elk and Suura are doing their girls' talk.

「Well that is probable, but sometimes, during expeditions the males from squad……to peek on me and other females when changing the clothes」

「Eh!? What, is that alright with you!?」

「Well, I'm not alright with it, but men are like that, so I have no intention of scolding them. They too must have the resolution to accept severe punishments upon being found out」

「That……can be interpreted as that there are times they peek without getting found out?」

「You're right. But that also means they have good spying abilities, right? At that time, well……I let them see me naked as reward for them training」

Elk was surprised on Suura's word filled with all her heart.

Does living in a society of men like army increases the resistance like this?

That is in truth not wrong, most of the females in army or guard squads, don't mind on being seen naked and can easily do indecent talks too. Suura too couldn't get out from that resistance.

Becoming aware of it, Elk's eyes looks over Suura's body.

Though in the dim place, the body of Suura seemed fascinating to Elk too, though being the same female.

Her breasts were large, and waist slim. An ideal figure for a woman.

She thought it wasn't strange that all men wanted to see it, even if they had to peep.

「But if that『someone/something』is really present, then I can only compliment this level of skill, I didn't sense it at all. I don't think it is them two, thought I would be happy if they're my subordinates……」

「No, I'm not happy about that」

Around the time, the two women were having that conversation,

Minato, who went to confirm that『someone/something』, stood on the top of tree…… and surveyed the surroundings with a serious looking expression.

Because that『someone/something』was not the one Suura thought.

The person hiding was really skillfully erasing his presence.

Even after concentrating through eyes, he didn't find any shadow. It was a perfect hiding skill which can't be caught unless someone has the ability to smell magical power scent like Minato.

To that『someone/something』which even has vague scent, Minato started talking alone.

「……Well, I don't feel any hostility, and I have no intention to pick your faults, so I'm returning for today, you too go back」

He turned back on the branch of tree.

It seemed like he would go immediately, but

「You must've had some goal, but I don't feel good on having my partner's body being peeped at. So, if you do something like this, or even more……」

One beat later,

「……I will use my hand, and then don't ask for forgiveness」

He said that and jumped below.

Some seconds later,

From a tree far from there, a single man appeared.

Smiling in a light smile not different from the daytime,

「……Not only my presence he even noticed my position……even though I had confidence in my skills of playing hide-n-seek. Just who is he, really」

While having his orange hair shine with the light of moon who is soon about to disappear, he spoke in voice with no tension.

「So, he is one of those sleeping dogs who shouldn't be disturbed……I've gotten used to dangers already, but it's foolish to disturb a sleeping dog, so I will draw back for now. Though he is interesting……but seems like 'they' have no relation」

That man……Zari says that and without breaking that smile till the end left the place obediently.

Chapter 31 - 『Blood Maple』

After Elk and Suura-san finished bathing, we had the same preserved food and the bears from yesterday's night and departed.

Today too in the carriage of the Trader Group were the traders and those two delinquents.

As for Elk, Zari and myself, we were riding in one of the carriages of the guards.

The reason Zari got on with us was, according to him, he wouldn't be able to relax if those two were near him and they would also quarrel.

It was approved because he he hadn't shown any bad attitude like those two.

On the other hand, when they yesterday joined with this squad, they started to flirt with Elk, Suura-san and other girls (though were ignored), and because of that they weren't approved of getting on the carriages of the guards.

Incidentally, I'm still somewhat anxious about Zari……but he hadn't shown any hostility or malice yet, so I'm just watching him carefully.

If he remained just like that, then he would just be a frivolous lad, who was sociable and easy to talk with.

While having those concerns in my mind, the group of carriages of the traders and the guards were moving through the『Crimson Forest』.

Well, because of a landslide the monsters were in a frenzy, so we had encounter with demons, but that was within (our) expectations.

I would punch them and drive them away, or sometimes kill them to get the materials, well like that we were moving forward.

☆☆☆

Along the way,

It was around noon when everyone was having lunch in their respective carriages, while the carriage was running.

As for the menu, it was the same as in the morning.

I was spending that time within the carriage while I was having fun chatting with Elk, Suura-san and Zari too.

Especially, Zari would start up new topics, so I wasn't getting bored……and I'm grateful for that.

When the chatting took a rest, Zari murmured absentmindedly while looking outside the window.

「We're moving……really smoothly, more than what I had expected」

「Smooth? We have had encounter with many demons before, you call that smoothly moving?」

「Isn't this smooth? If you think of the fact that this group of carriages full-packed with food is moving in the forest where only agitated demons are roaming」

Zari replied.

The commodities of the trader group, emergency food of the knights, and the food we have gotten from the local procurement this morning, in short, within this group of carriages there was too much food.

For demons it would be like a buffet that was moving in the forest.

……I didn't want to think this, but for demons, humans like us would also be food.

It would be natural for us to be targeted. And, this forest had many demons from the start.

Just what were those traders thinking, using this forest as a shortcut. Why did nobody opposed it?

I asked Zari, he told me that at first he did oppose it, but the other escorts surrendered to the dazzling persuasion of the increased reward, so it was decided by majority vote. My condolences.

And considering that fact, the pace we were getting attacked was very low according to Zari.

「At this pace, wouldn't we get out of forest by today, platoon captain-san?」

「Sure enough. If nothing goes wrong, then by the twilight we will be out. But getting to the city will be difficult. We would reach by tomorrow morning」

「City, do you mean Volca?」

Upon asking, Suura-san nodded.

Huh? But weren't the traders aiming to go to the neighbouring town -It was called Listal or something - , would it be good to return back?

「From what I heard, when they were in the forest, they were attacked many time by demons and lost a little of their luggage, so wouldn't' it be better to replenish the goods?」

「Not only luggage but also escorts. At first, the escorts were 5 including us」

「Did they got caught in the attack?」

「Yeah, the two left. But not to the underworld, they escaped during fight. From what I think that others demons might have attacked them. Or maybe, they got out of the forest somehow」

Oh my goodness……

From what I heard after that, apparently Zari fought there for completing the request, but the other two, simply couldn't run because they didn't get an opportunity for that.

Like that, when it became a helpless situation, they abandoned some quantity of food from the commodities, and survived the fight, soon after they were found out by us.

The trader group is in a bad condition even now. I mean in the sense they had to cut off commodities and escorts. In that case, returning to city for replenishing commodities and hiring new escorts would be natural……no, it would be inevitable.

When I thought that, right there Suura-san cut in,

「No, only we will be returning to city. The people from trader group……, apparently would return to their normal route after getting out of the forest and aim for Listal」

「「「What!?」」」

And due to the unexpected words, I, Elk as well as Zari leaked out a strange sound from our mouth.

Eh, what does that mean?

Do those people from the trader group plan to go towards Listal without replenishing the goods and fill the empty spots the guards had left?

「Yeah. To tell you the truth, the leader of that group told us this. That the『Escorts are fine till the time we get out of forest, after that we would head towards Listal by ourselves』 ……」

「Are they sane? Even if strong demons don't appear on the direct route, but are they seriously willing to go without even refilling commodities and even escorts」

「I too haven't been told anything about that, though being one of those『escorts』」

「No matter how you see it, aren't they too much impatient?」

「Worrying about that, I too suggested them to once again complete the preparations, but they have to deliver some important luggage as fast as possible, so they didn't

hear me」

……? What might it be? They didn't had any raw stuff with them.

If they did want to deliver it, then it would only if they were able to be alive.

「I also suggested to take some of our men as escorts, but they refused. Saying『We cannot endure for making guards, who are responsible for controlling public order to do something like this』……something like that」

……Eeeehh~……?

Doesn't that sound too much suspicious?

No matter how one thinks, it would be better to let some guards escort them but still they refuse the offer with that forced out unnatural reason and also try to go by themselves.

I could only hear those lines saying that either the cargo or the receiver of cargo is something not good.

I wasn't the only one who thought that. Elk and Zari too made a bitter face on those sentences.

Zari……looked like he really hadn't been told.

Naturally, Suura-san also thought that, so she tried to enquire more, but they didn't talk anything else and the case got closed.

「By the way, Zari-dono」

「What, captain-san?」

「It's about this trader group. I have only been told about that it is some sort of important cargo, but……would you, Zari-dono, happen to know what those people are carrying?」

She asked them this too, but they didn't reply.

No, they did reply but it was, 'daily necessities' or 'everything is harmless and inoffensive', they didn't speak anything about that important thing, so sure was suspicious.

They are also unwilling for the guards to enter the luggage carriage.

「It's unfortunate, but even I don't know about the things captain-san is wanting to know. I did get on the luggage carriage but mostly it is all food」

「……『Mostly』would mean, that there are luggage that aren't food, right?」

「Yeah. There are some firmly packed boxes」

「Boxes?」

「Yes, boxes. I don't know what's inside of them neither did they tell me. It is tied up by a rope and fixed inside the carriage, in place of cushioning substance it is placed in jute bags, and even a smell prevention cloth has been put over it……so I think it must be something really valuable?」

「? Smell prevention cloth?」

「You don't know? It's a cloth that completely cuts off the scent of the thing it is wrapped against inside out. Like food with bad smell or materials from demons……and some also use it to carry corpses of people」

Hmm, something that great existed here? New thing to me.

Hearing that, the crease on the temple of Suura-san grew more. Did she found something useful in the talk?

「Smell prevention cloth? Just what are they carrying……」

「It would only mean it is something that shouldn't be revealed and can be identified with smell, right? Didn't you made a mistake in choosing the quest?」

Zari scratched his hand while muttering some words.

「Don’t tell me, they are really carrying corpses, right?」

「I do think so. Every box was about the size of a head of human, no somewhat more smaller」

In that case, unless they are carrying the corpse in pieces, then it is impossible to carry them. In that case, it might be possible too.

But I also didn’t think that it was the case.

As for why……

「I think it is something that has a sweet smell」

「「「Sweet smell?」」」

The three ask me all at once.

While making a face saying they didn’t understand what I meant.

「Minato, what do you mean……by any chance, can you smell the thing on the other side of smell prevention cloth?」

「Eh? Ah, Yeah, a little bit」

In the morning, before departing, when I passed by their luggage carriage……there was a sweet smell. Only a little smell was there to the extent that someone other than me wouldn’t have noticed it.

But because the smell was so faint that it was on my mind. Only my nose, which had been trained & enhanced, could smell it faintly.

The origin of smell was without a doubt inside carriage, but it felt like the scent came from somewhere far.

I see, because of that smell prevention cloth, the smell was faint.

「……You had good ears, but your nose is the same, eh. Just how much」

「Well if I feel like it, then I can smell and differentiate to the extent dogs can do……」

Like finding the people I know by following their trail of scent. In truth, during the time of that shitty『test』, I did something similar.

「……Thank you for giving an answer that surpasses my heightened expectations」

Oh, finally, Elk’s reproachful stare had come out. Thank you for the meal

「You’re not even a beast person, but you can do that? Really~, the world is a big place~」

Zari laughed dryly. It seemed like accepting reality was difficult for him. ……In fact, he was still half-convinced.

「……Sweet smell, something needed to be hidden and『Crimson Forest』……in that case don’t tell me……」

After some time passed, Suura-san came back to earth, she reacted to the phrase『sweet smell』which I said.

She once again asked me『Is that true?』, and after I nodded, she once again started to think.

Does she has some idea?

At that time,

SFX: GASHAAaaaNNNn!! (*breaking*)

「「「!?」」」

From the carriage running in front, that sound,

And the sounds of some middle-aged man scream resounded.

By the time I realized the person screaming was the leader of the『trader group』, one

of the knights came to Suura-san and rapidly spoke the situation.

Seemed like the two delinquents did something again.

They drank in the day, got drunk, and fell right into the luggages because of unsteady legs.

And in that moment something broke……seeing that the leader shouted, this much did the knight guy talked.

Did they break some high class wine, the moment I thought that,

「……Ah, sweet smell」

The『sweet smell』we were talking about right now came drifting from the front.

Just, this time it was different from the morning, it was strong enough that normal people too can smell it.

Did those two……fell and broke the『luggage』we were just talking?

At that moment,

The three people in the carriage too smelled the scent,

and the moment later, Suura-san gasped and her face color changed.

Before I could even think 'what happened', Suura-san jumped out of the carriage really fast.

And ran towards the front, or maybe to the place where that smell was coming from.

We three also had curiosity, so we chased after her.

When we reach the place, Suura-san was shivering her body while looking inside the carriage. Really what happened?

I looked in the same carriage from Suura-san's right side,

There was a scene I somewhat couldn't understand.

The leader of trader group was making a face as though world has come to an end and was sitting like his hips lost the power,

One of the two delinquents - the obese one - was standing with wine bottle in one hand while making an unpleasant face. He seemed he sobered up.

Suura-san looked all that with cold eyes,

And inside the carriage, the thick liquid, which was also the origin of smell, was spread here and there along with the jar fragments.

It was pretty dark, so I couldn't make out what it was exactly, but it was something of bright red color. Jam?

From what I saw, I could understand that delinquent A got drunk, started playing like fool, tripped and broke the something.

Zari looked from beside me,

「……Oh this is just too bad……ain't this『Blood Maple』?」

Said that while stuttering.

Elk came by my side and seeing the scene her face became ghastly pale and her eyes opened wide in shock.

Eh, What, what does this mean!? Explain, I need an explanation. Please!

☆☆☆

『Blood Maple』

It was the refined sap from the trunk of some sort of tree, in other words it was a type of maple syrup.

This rich and elegant substance was easy to make but also has depth to it. The person who ate it would get addicted to its sweetness, it could even make nobles with refined

palate moan, it was an ingredient that dangerous.

It was a high-class item, common people won't be able to take it, it was traded only at considerably high prices.

In addition, the place with trees having that sap grow in this『Crimson Forest』, and because their numbers are less, so it was more pricey.

They dry up upon taking excessively, so it was always regulated.

But this honey like thing ingredient also required precautions.

Like Alcohol, it also had the effects of arousing mind and raising dependency, so taking too much at once wouldn't be good for body.

With only that it would've been cute, but this『Blood Maple』had a horrible nature that『If it wasn't manufactured correctly, it would lure in the demons present in surroundings』.

Because of that nature this honey like thing had been known as something needs to be treated carefully and during transportation it also need more vigilance.

So for harvesting|manufacturing|transporting and selling, all these needed permission.

Therefore, it almost never made appearance in market.

A part of high class restaurants and nobles had monopolized only a little amount of it as a luxury item.

But there existed the trade behind the scenes for these things. to the extent that it was only natural.

The『Blood Maple』sinking the floor of the carriage in front me was also one of those items.

It was the illegal『Blood Maple』which was harvested and processed illegally, also was being transported in secret to selling

Hence, the subordinates of Suura-san were restraining them, the people from trader group.

I see, the mysteries have been solved.

The reason they wanted to part with Suura-san's group was because they were afraid that if this thing got discovered.

That cloth……『smell prevention cloth』was used so that no one discovers it by smell. And so that it wouldn't lure in more demons.

As for the reason they were in a hurry was because they had some dangerous people as client in the black market. So, as expected they didn't want to delay the day of trade. Who knows what they might do, right?

One of the concern of those all, right now had become reality.

According to Suura-san, Zari and other two would be taken in for questioning, but the traders would be taken in the prison, no-questions-asked.

Well, it only meant the item was that much great and dangerous thing.

It was due to various coincidences, but like this the smuggling of『Blood Maple』was stopped.

And, by questioning these traders, they would be able to find some information on people in black market.

Well it was due to unexpected good luck, but Hooray Hooray and everyone went back happily after……

……Unfortunately, it wouldn't go that way.

Well then, let us take a look at the situation once again.

『Blood Maple』had been scattered in the carriage.

It was thick to the extent it could have been mistaken as honey……and in proportion, its scent too was strong.

That scent, urges the instincts, arouses……and lures in demons.

Just what might happen if this maple thing had been scattered in the carriage, which was present in『Crimson Forest』, where demons were many from the start, and were also agitated due to a landslide, furthermore our route had been stopped by that landslide……

「Umm, Suura-san?」

「……I'm sorry, but Minato-dono, Elk-dono, because of these idiots the situation is going to change a lot. I want your both help as escorts」

「……Well we don't have other choices to make」

After confirming our consent, Suura-san went out the carriage,

Then said straightforwardly with all her power.

「Everyone, take emergency battle position! Change of plans, from now onwards we are needed to protect this carriage and leave this place as fast as possible!! If you don't fight with dying will……then don't think of living!!」

On the other side of Suura-san's command, my enhanced ears,

……catched the sounds of severals tens and hundreds of demons coming here. I could hear their footsteps, flapping of wings and breathing sounds.

It seemed like, this whole would be turning into a battlefield.

Chapter 32 - Forest Mayhem Part 1

Starting with the breaking of the jar containing the『Blood Maple』, the situation changed suddenly.

It was a dangerous honey which ceaselessly lures in, each and every type of demon.

It wasn't even needed to predict, what would happen if one jar containing this highly concentrated honey broke into pieces.

Currently we were running at full speed to get out the forest as soon as possible.

『Leaving from that place』would be a half-assed useless idea, according to Suura-san.

As for the reason, it was scent of『Blood Maple』.

The scent of this honey was so strong, that even if it was put in jar or pot, the scent would leak out of it, that so really easily.

According to Suura-san, normally they would have left the honey, as it would act as a diversion and our safety would increase, but this time these are all smuggling products, so they are needed to be taken back as evidence.

Therefore, the ones that weren't broken have been packed into carriages of the guards.

The carriage in which the whole honey has been spilled, had strong scent ingrained into it, so let alone the forest, it would be dangerous everywhere, and so we left that carriage behind.

The final blow was that everyone present at that scene had somewhat scent of it stuck to their bodies.

The so-called『lingering scent』. That alone was enough to lure in monsters.

And so currently, we were attempting to run at full speed - at the maximum speed that the carriage could bear/cope with - while intercepting the demons which were attracted by the scent.

The members of squad led by Suura-san too were fighting all-together.

Surrounding the carriage, and with magicians on top of carriage, they were defending it from the demons and were helping the advance of the carriage.

Of course, Elk, Zari, those two delinquents and I, too, were in the frontlines.

If we didn't then the corpses would only increase, so there was no other choice.

Incidentally, my existence was something like that of an striker, I just needed to eliminate the demons interfering.

It wasn't like I couldn't launch long distance attacks, but this way was more of my speciality.

I left the long distance attacks to guards and Suura, and Zari who could use magic,

「Hwochaaaa!!」

While raising a shout resembling to characters in old kung fu movies, I shot out a roundhouse kick towards the front.

With that one attack, I attacked three…four demons who were about to attack the carriage.

With that momentum, I swung my kick towards the rear and got rid of every moving obstacle in my kick's range.

「Ah Minato-kun! I will do some cleaning over there, step aside a little bit!」

The moment my feet landed on ground, Zari said that to me from the roof of carriage.

I glanced from the edge of my eyes, I could see an orange magical power coiling around his hand.

I was in a quite bad place to avoid it with a side step, so I fixed my centre of gravity and step away from there while doing continuous backflips.

「Thank you……『Sandstorm』!」

In the next instant, including the place I was standing before and the front of Zari, got covered with a sandstorm like magic.

He sweeped out the small demons like insects and all, because it was difficult to go in close-combats with them due to their small size.

The demons with big bodies were the only ones left.

I was dealing with them by directly assaulting them. Suura-san too was dealing with them with her bow and arrow and powerful magic.

The demons who would slip through our line of defense, were left to people riding in carriage or people fighting near the carriages. which was the position Elk was given.

Incidentally, Alva was in carriage because the situation was dangerous.

I told it with a great deal of efforts, and now it was obediently waiting for us. It really is smart.

Even so, the demons were too much……

The numbers couldn't be compared to before the time the『maple』was spilled in that carriage. In 5-10 mins new flock of demons would come, so we had been fighting all time.

There were no casualties so far, but there had been injured people. All of them were guards.

We had been fighting in rotations, but the fatigue was piling up. At this rate, it wouldn't be good.

I was having lot of stamina and magical power left, but this situation wasn't something, I alone would be able to deal with. The thing called as defensive battle had always been a bother.

Furthermore, I was fighting bare-handedly, so compared to Zari who could use magic, the number of demons I could deal at once were lot less. Well for covering it, I was dealing with the big and troublesome opponents.

From that reason, if from here, the numbers of demons didn't go down then the situation would only get worse without getting chance to improve.

So, the plan to leave the forest as fast as possible could be considered as the ideal one here.

「Suura-san, Zari, Elk, can you three hold on? Don't you need some rest?」

「I'm fine. Fortunately, I have more magical power compared to normal people. Though, only half of the arrows are left……well, we will have to do something, right」

「I'm also fine. It's true that I have gotten somewhat tired, but this isn't the situation to complain for that much of tiredness」

「Keeping it aside, are you alright? You have been fighting since the beginning without taking any rest」

Elk said.

Well, I still had stamina and even my magical power quantity was more, so no problem.

Well, I had still some stamina left, as for my magical power there is a lot left.

And, me getting out right now for rest would……only be bad.

That was because, the situation currently was only made by me fighting without any rest.

Suura-san too knew about it, though faintly.

She said she was fine. but the guards……especially, the ones who were fighting by swinging swords and spears were showing the signs of fatigue reaching its limit. They all needed immediate rest.

Thinking about the fact, that the fatigue would only increase, so I would not leave from here.

Suura-san sent a gaze saying『Please』with an apologetic expression as though she understood the reason I wasn't taking rest.

I don't mind that in particular, but, the people taking rest in carriage are in more trouble right now, right?

The squad was divided in various teams, while one team was taking rest and getting healed by people who can use healing magic, all other teams would be fighting outside, and this was rotated after a fixed time.

However, even with that they wouldn't be able to recover completely and not be able to able to fight for a long time.

In fact, currently too, the fatigue hadn't been cleared out completely.

At this rate, the next might be fine but the rotation after that might give us some casualties or severely injured people.

In that case, the fighting spirit and morale would decrease and it would turn into a disaster.

More than anything, the fighting potential which had already decreased would decrease even more. That would be complete shit.

……Only if it came to that.

「Umm, Suura-san」

「What happened?」

「Err, for some time starting from now, I will take take charge of vanguards in the front half, so let them all rest in that time」

from now on ,I will take charge if the vanguards in the front half, so let them all rest for some time.

「Wha……Whaatt!? Just what in the hell are you saying!?」

A second later, not only Suura-san but Elk and Zari, too, were sending a gaze right at my face that meant『What the hell are you saying!?』.

「Ah, I'm sorry, but I can only take front half and that is also my limit, so I will leave the demons coming from behind to someone else. And, for the small demons, I leave to you」

「No, will you……really be fine!? I have seen your strength from before, but taking them all alone will be……」

「Yes, I will be fine. Just……」

「Just?」

「……Fighting bare-handedly was getting tough, so I will be changing my fighting style」

More precisely, I take out a pole from the『storage belt』by wishing『come out』.

Do you remember? This was the one I used to coil『Naga』when taking it out. The black pole which could expand and retract at will.

[AK: always reminds me of Rúyì Jīngū Bàng… for those who do not know what it is, it is the name of the staff of Sūn Wùkōng]

[ET: For those people who are much knowledgeable about it. What AK said is commonly known as Monkey King and its (don't know if it really was male though it is called as King) staff is an expandable one. Quite convenient when putting clothes]

At that point, new flock of demons came, so I moved some more metres forward the guards fighting in the front.

Then, the point when demons reached to the head of pole, I mowed them down while making a line.

[ET: The raw have one character (一), that can be said as line so there you go]

Using that momentum, I raised the pole from down to above diagonally. In those two rounds, one-third of big demons were taken care of.

Then, I step back, 2 steps, and,

「——Expandddddd!!」

The pole expanded several metres, as though it were agreeing to my will. I used the centrifugal force and while making a semicircle in front with the pole, I blew away the demons.

Then, after killing the left one, two demons with my kicks, I faced Suura-san.

「……Well something like this」

「I-I see…… Try not to overdo it」

Suura got convinced with my current actions, and leaving some guards outside the carriage, she let all others rest in the respective carriages.

「……I will be accepting your offer for now, but tell me the moment it gets tough for you. Most likely, Minato-dono is the strongest person here. If you get injured, that will be more troublesome」

「Roger. Then, I will leave the dealing of small ones to you. Zari you too」

「Yes go it~. Ah, Elk-chan you should rest now. And wake those two who are sleeping soundly in the carriage, it is time for your rotation」

Zari said.

Elk was killing the bird demon which came flying when she heard Zari's words.

Her movements seemed light, but her shoulders we moving because of breathing, and she was sweating a lot.

「Yeah, understood. I have gotten tired……and resting will really help」

「Hm, Good work Elk……don't move!」

Immediately after,

A bird demon assaulted Elk when she was about to go inside the carriage.

Immediately, I took out a different weapon in my free hand……and threw it towards that demon.

It flew cutting through the air and struck the glabella of bird demon. It was killed and fell down.

Elk was showing an expression of relief and fear just when the danger coming at her was killed. The demon fell near the carriage, Elk took out the thing I threw while still having that expression and then threw the corpse towards the brushwoods on the side of road.

Seeing that shining thing in Elk's hand, Zari and Knights send a gaze towards it as though they had seen something strange.

Are they not in this world,『shuriken』I mean.

It was something like throwing knife, but because its surface was like a blade, it could be considered dangerous.

Elk was familiar with it because she had been training with me, but when she first saw it, she too was scared.

Incidentally, this thing was made from the same material as Elk's armor, which was

supported by Noel-neesan.

It was a throwing item, so including the fact it had a peculiar shape too, it costs quite a bit. Who cares about that, it is cool and easy to use too.

「Elk, you alright?」

「Yeah, you saved me. Thank you」

「I see. Ah, but take this, for just in case. Here catch」

I stopped Elk before she entered the carriage, and threw the vials of medicine by taking them out of backpack.

It was the so-called『Potion』. It was a drinking medicine which reduces the fatigue and recovers the magical power.

Elk told me to buy them because they're useful……but it didn't had any chance of coming out, so it was one of the items who would've passed their expiration date.

「Use that. It will help you recovering faster, right?」

「Really? What about you?」

「I am fine, and I probably won't need it」

「I see……thanks. Don't overdo it」

Confirming Elk getting inside the carriage, I, once again faced the flock of demons.

Well~ then, I said something like that in such a grandiose manner, so now, I have to work hard at any cost.

I once again took stance with pole in my right hand, adjusted its length and kicked off the ground.

Chapter 32 - Forest Mayhem Part 2

Several minutes later.

「Suura-san how much more will it take? I've been fighting, so I've got no idea of distance……」

「Positionally we would be able to leave from this forest in a hour! Everyone, give it your all!」

「「「OooooHH!」」」

The order of Suura-san was the answer to my question and the knights replied in high spirits.

After some time, I took on more demons, which helped most of the knights to recover and we were somehow able to maintain the frontlines.

Yea, it was worth the hard work.

And, Elk too returned to the frontlines some minutes ago.

「Even so, you used a weapon」

「Eh?」

Elk was fighting the flying demons and almost dead demons while standing on top of carriage when she said those words to me. She seemed to have a lot composure due to the daily training

Though……I had composure to look towards her when answering, but still I talked by just speaking.

「I did know about that『shuriken』, but……your stick techniques too are good」

「Ah, that you mean. Well, I had briefly been taught by mom about 'how to use various weapons' during training」

I learnt not only stick techniques, but also sword, spear, whip and even tonfa.

Naturally, I had practised them all in fights when I was in the woodlands.

「Then why? Why don't you fight using weapons though you're strong when using them?」

「Huh? Did I not tell you?」

「Like I said, it's the first time I see you using weapon. Is there some reason behind it?」

「Ah, Yea. Well, there is」

Well, I had dealt with one more flock of demons right now……so, I decided to tell her as it would help me take a breather.

The reason I fought empty-handed were divided in two.

I was more specialized in fighting empty-handed, and my power too comes out.

My magic close combat fighting style was to fill up magical power in my body and hit. Really Simple. If it wasn't this simple then I wouldn't had been able to do it.

See, like I have said many times. Magic that would requiere me to control magical power outside my body would be catastrophic for me.

So inevitably, I use magical power inside my body and it will even increase my attack power. If I used weapons, it would increase my range but the power would be lower compared to hitting directly with punch.

[ET: Yay~ Saitama comes here]

Unlike the close combat in which I used my power, in fights with weapon the flow of battle would be influenced upon the strength and other things of the weapon. So I always used fists when fighting.

It would be somewhat better if the weapon had a mechanism for pouring magical power into it, but still fighting with fists would still be stronger.

In addition, controlling the power…… to put it simply, It is difficult to hold back when using weapons.

Empty-handedly I would be able to control the power, but when using weapons, it would sometimes increase too much and sometimes it would decrease even more.

Taking all that into consideration, using bare-hands, which I could control freely, was the better choice.

As for the other reason.

It was to feel the sensation of hitting something with my body, fists, skin.

The sensation of demon's body being dented, muscles tearing, bones smashing……and the feeling of demon's life vanishing, those were the things that I wanted to feel.

Let me tell you beforehand that I have no interest in killing demons or anything indiscriminately. On the contrary, without a reason I have never thought of killing.

But, in this world that was impossible. The fights with demons were the sort of thing where words 'either you die or I die' worked.

That was something mom ingrained into my bones during training. I had mind of an adult (different from『mental age』), so I was aware of that.

[AK: Yeah here comes the law of the jungle]

And if necessary, I even would have to fight against humans.

In the fights of 'kill or be killed', where my life would be at stake.

[ET: The words for either you die or I die and this are both different. That's why I have not written them the same, though they mean the same]

So I have beared it in my mind so as to『not forget』that.

I never forgotten the sensation of stealing the life of a single demon each time I attack with my fists.

Every time I punch, kick, the sensation that comes from my fists and legs told me to not forget this feeling.

Otherwise, I would lose every feeling related to fights except ignorance.

I didn't want to become the guy who saw the demons as existences who would just give XP and materials, as though it were a video-game.

Well, in the end it turns out to be self-satisfaction only.

「……Isn't it childish?」

「Isn't it fine? After all, you're still a child. ……But」

Elk took a deep breath,

「I think it's splendid. That thinking too and executing your thoughts too. Though, it's my personal opinion」

「……Thanks」

She praised me and heard my story. Thanks to that, I felt like I had gotten a little bit, only a little bit stronger. I too am the calculating type of person.

Suddenly I faced back towards the carriage and various sorts of stares from Suura-san, Zari and knights came to me.

There were stares filled with admiration, some were with respect, some which I didn't understand, and last were the stares saying they had seen something strange.

……Among all these, there were also lukewarm stares looking at me and Elk mutually.

I take back my words back from before. I should've chosen place and time before talking.

Okay, now renewing the feelings, and let's get ready for the next attack of demons……Hm?

「Ah, hey, Alva! Don't come out, it's dangerous!」

I saw Alva perching on the canopy of carriage……I didn't knew it came out.

I told it to stay within the carriage obediently. Did it got hungry?

Now that I think about it, ever since giving it food during noon, I had been neglecting it. It sure had lot of appetite even while being a newborn.

Alva was staring at the knights who were standing in the rear of carriage while attacking demons with magic.

It was staring intently. Intently.

Ah, Alva? umm……

「That's bad Alva. They are not your food, okay? You can't eat them」

Piiiiii?

「Hungry, eh? Okay fine. I will catch something later for you to eat, so wait for the time being」

Piiiiii……

Hearing our conversation, the magician knights were slightly startled. Ah It would be fine. I will tell it thoroughly that eating humans is wrong, even if they can use magic.

After some time of lecturing, Alva seemed to have understood my words. Well then, now I have to take down some red lizards and magic bunnies……Oh?

「Then, let's finish the scary talk here. A new group seems to make an appearance」

「So you knew it was a scary talk……Hey, what is that!?」

Elk looked towards the way which I was looking at, and raised her voice startled.

Continuing onwards, Suura-san and Zari too opened their eyes wide.

In front stood the insect type demons, having its body covered by a dark brown (almost black) shell.

Its appearance was like a mixture of praying mantis, tiger beetle and G life-form which usually could be found in kitchens. In simple words, it looked truly fiendish with its size that was about two to three metres long.

There were 4 in total. They were intimidating while raising their forefoot.

「……『Devil Roach』, now something bad came out!」

「Is its name『Devil Roach』?」

「Yeah. It's the race that can be considered as the strongest in this『Crimson Forest』. Normally, they wouldn't come out in shallow areas of forest like here, but……」

「This too might be the effect of the landslide. This is really the worst scenario」

Zari added in help there.

From what I heard, they are rank C demons. So the same rank as strongest demons of Naga, the『little beast』s.

And there were 5 of them……as you can see.

Furthermore, it had the name『roach』, meant it was classified as bug.

Though, Suura-san took a great shock but she didn't show any hesitation in taking actions.

She raised her voice so that it could even be heard by knights sleeping within the carriages.

「Everyone listen! Even the ones who are sleeping! From now (Snap!!) we will leave

the minimum members here and rest all will (Snap!!) will go out and start (Snaaapp!!) the subjugation of devil roa-(Breeeeaaaakkk!!!!)-ch……or so I had thought, but there is no need for that, that's why keep on resting」

What happened?

I took care of all 4 while Suura-san was giving out her speech.

No, well, I couldn't let knights fight against something dangerous. They all were politely intimidating that it seemed like I would be able to take care of them quickly.

With one-hit-one-kill, I mowed them all them.

After throwing the corpses of cockroach monster x4 so that it wouldn't become hindrance for carriages, I suddenly looked behind only to find Suura san doing a facepalm and others looking in mute amazement.

Oi, everyone don't daze out and fight? Do you want to die?

「No, well……you were this sort of guy after all」

「Eh, Elk you too? I thought you will understand me」

「About what? Your monstrous conditions?」

So meanie.

「……Well, I have no complaints because there was no injuries. Thank you Minato-dono」

「Minato-kun we can really rely on you, seriously~」

Suura-san with a stiff smile and Zari along with his dry laughter said those words.

Hmph, you can keep on that. I'm a monster for you all.

[ET: Minato says in a tone as though saying 'like you all will understand my feelings'. Well something like that]

But these guys were living in this forest too. Nostalgic, huh.

「? Were they living in those『woodlands』too?」

「Yes. But they were the bottom in the food chain」

They lived in caves, and only had large numbers.

Well, I had seen them getting eaten by other strong demons as food.

「……Bottom……the strongest rank c monsters of『Crimson Forest』are……at bottom……」

Setting aside Elk who was making a distant look,

「Umm, Suura-san, can you take back the order from before?」

「hm? What do you mean?」

No, I meant that take out everyone and tell them to keep their guard up.

Because, It is soon going to turn into a situation where that will be needed.

「? What do you mean? The devil roaches all have been eliminated……do you mean reinforcements!?」

「Yes, and that too……seems freakishly more dangerous compared to big c**kroaches」

……I have been hearing it from before.

The sound of super-extra-large wings fluttering and it was giving me dangerous feeling.

The volume had already increased to the level that even Suura-san and others could hear.

it was getting louder and louder. No doubt about it, it was the sound of an insect's wings.

And, on the faces of everyone near the carriage impatience and confusion appeared……the next second,

Along with the sound of over-sized wings『Buuuuuuunnnn!!』, a green colored shadow landed in front us.

Chapter 33 - Exceed Hopper

「……Grasshopper?」

「Grasshopper it is」

「Yeah sure is」

「No doubt it is a grasshopper」

Appearing in front us, stopping the path of carriage was a……grasshopper.

Its appearance was fiendish, and its overall length was about 3 m.

Its shell was more tough looking than the armor of Naga's scales.

Face was, definitely not of the grasshoppers I had seen, so it was a demon. I could see fangs inside the mouth. It even had horns in place of antennas.

Legs x6 too had evenly separated fingers. This was……not an insect anymore.

There was no other component on which I could identify it, so for now I would call it grasshopper, and the only thing I know right now was that, this was completely showing its hostility towards us.

It must be natural after all, it was lured in by the scent of『maple』and also was hungry.

Well, I know one more thing, that this guy was a lot more dangerous than the『devil roach』from before.

「Elk, do you know it?」

「No, I've never seen it. In the first place, a big grasshopper type of monster shouldn't be present in this forest……grasshopper, grasshopper……」

「……There is a high chance that this is a『Exceed Hopper』」

Suura-san answered by cutting in our conversation.

「Exceed Hopper?」

……Why does it feel like I've heard it somewhere recently……

「Yeah, its rank is B. Certainly it doesn't live in this forest, but it's a demon which inhibits in the different danger area lying in the opposite direction from the city」

The moment she heard that explanation, Elk widened her eyes in shock,

It couldn't be helped. It already had fiendish appearance, and its rank too was above the previous group.

How many people might be there who could fight a guy like this?

From what I heard, the subordinates of Suura-san were inexperienced, though being regular soldiers. It we were to give them ranks like adventurers it would be at most E or D. Not much different from Elk.

Though those two delinquents were rank D, even if both of them teamed up together, it would be impossible to stand against a rank B.

The left ones were, Suura-san, Zari and me.

Frankly I would somehow take care of myself. But, I have not idea about both of their strengths……

Well seeing their fights from before, I could understand that they were experienced. Bow and arrow, and magic attacks of Suura-san and attacks by Zari had stability.

In addition……I found one big problem.

This was not noticed by others yet……

「By the way, are there points I need to keep in mind? Like, its weak points or will other of them will come if I defeat it」

「No, other than its strength, there's nothing else. Surely it has somewhat intelligence and it might concentrate attacks on the person with most strength, but that's something every demon does」

「I see……too bad」

「? What do you mean……?」

Before Suura-san finished saying,

I had already kicked off the ground and flew towards『Exceed Hopper』, it too had jumped at us around the same time as me.

I use the pole as shield to stop its assault while trying not to get hurt by the sharp pointed horns.

Surprisingly, the shock was so strong that it sent me two or three metres back, but I somehow held out.

……Thank god, its name wasn't just for fun.

Then, it bite the pole that was being pressed against its face with its fiendish jaws.

The pole wasn't something soft that it would be broken by just this much, then in the next moment, I felt the sensation of being pulled strongly and suddenly my body floated.

Hearing the damn noise of wings, I understood that it flew while holding pole in its mouth. So did it want to have an aerial battle or want to kill me by dropping……

I didn't know what it wanted to do, but I had no intention of going along with it.

Furthermore, Elk's voice which I could hear from below seemed so have a trace of worry.

I don't want to get a girl worry about me, let's finish this fast.

While having the pole in its mouth, I turned my body before its very own eyes in some sort of rhythmic gymnastic form and rolled over to its back side.

Then, I left the pole for a moment, joined my hands together - of course, I didn't forget to enhance the power and fill in magical power - then dropped it like a hammer.

「——Urrraa!!」

Along with the dull sounds, due to my attack near its medulla oblongata (does an insect even have one?), the giant body started to fall down.

Apparently, the brain of insects had always been small, so I wasn't expecting some concussion, simply the damage seemed to be great. The flapping of wings became unreliable and it crashed into ground.

And, it would be unbearable to fly again, so I deal with it quickly.

Around the neck part of this grasshopper which was trying to stand up……

「『Guillotine Leg』!!」

I swung my heel clad in wind magic.

The axe kick which was launched with sharpness of a windblade, though didn't made the sound of wind cutting something, but it surely did drop the head.

「……Fuu」

Really, this technique hasn't been my favorite. This techniques was grotesque and lots of blood also comes out.

But, insects all had strong vitality, so defeating without killing would be really hard. I didn't want a situation in which others got hurt because I went easy on it and left it alive.

Well, I could make it immovable by tearing off the wings and legs, in that case, either it would starve to death or be eaten by other demons.

It would be better to finish it off an instant rather than inflicting pain……oh, this too could be called as self-satisfaction.

Even after cutting the neck, the body of insect convulsed and wriggled, so I threw it towards the grove of trees. Like this it won't be a hindrance for carriage.

I prayed in my heart, for a happy next life of the demon who became my victim, then refreshed my feelings, and faced back.

This is something……for me who would do this from now on too.

Fuu, while taking a breath, I took the pole from grasshopper's body, then

『stored』it back into the waist belt, while I was doing that,

「……After coming this far, I've nothing left to say. You actually insta-killed that exceed hopper, eh」

Suura-san said those words along with a tired smile that seemed like she had given up upon understanding all the fears and surprise she felt in this short amount of time.

Zari, Elk and others too were having same expressions. Elk was a little better because she knew about my strength.

「From what I heard, your rank is B, right……?」

「Yeah, that's right. In that case, should I show the guild card?」

「No, it's fine. Either way, I wouldn't be able to understand many things」

Saying that, Suura-san took her stance, and turned back for taking on the demons,

……and soon enough, she realized almost all demons were missing.

She showed a surprised expression for a second, then as if finally passed through her, she breathed and let power out of her shoulders……hey, don't do that, the fight is still not over. It's only starting now.

「Hey, Suura-san and others who let their guards down, don't do that. The fight is still not over」

「? Not over, well right we have to deal with other attacks until we leave this forest」

Elk said.

「I have no time to put on airs, so let me speak it loud and clear. The『Exceed Hopper』I defeated just now……was probably only a scout member. There is a whole『crowd』of them in the vicinity」

「「「Huh!?」」」

Oh, they harmonized. Elk & others, good job.

Though Suura-san didn't let out a voice she was also surprised.

「……What did you base it on? Just how did you predict it?」

「Rather than predicting it, I have been hearing them since a while. The sound of their wings」

With my thoses words, the whole party went into silence.

Then, the sounds of leaves of trees fluttering and cries of demons on the other side of trees too was mixed in……

……And I heard it. The sound of wings which could be heard without any enhanced hearing ability,

No doubt, the sounds were of the same thing from before.

However, from all directions. They had surrounded us.

「……How many are there?」

「Maybe eight or nine. There is only one exceptionally big wing sound mixed in」

「Exceptionally big……? Is there some other demons with them?」

「Dunno……seeing with eyes is the fastest way to confirm things」

Immediately after,

Green colored demons came flying from inside the grove of trees as though they were getting impatient and saw that the current time as a good opportunity to strike.

In an instant, a large group started flying, seeming like forest had started to fly.

The 8『Exceed Hopper』s ……started revolving above our heads like vultures aiming for their prey.

The sound of 8 wings vibrating the space……encouraged the sense of urgency.

「If an insect-hater saw this, that person would surely go down」

「Even if they aren't they would go down, in despair and fear that is」

Wisdom words from Suura-san.

In fact, I was able to read the strange expressions, filled with fear, shock, despair on everyone's face……while they were looking at the scene unfold.

Among the knights, there were people who dropped their weapons in despair, some were having their bodies tremble and the armor was making clattering sounds.

「8 in total. Frankly, this is a desperate situation」

「No shit……captain-san, can you solo it?」

「……It would work in one-on-one fights. How about you, Zari-dono?」

「I too……am something similar. If I overdo it then around 2」

「Oh, that is reliable」

Eh? wtf!? Zari, you were really that much strong?

Now that I think about it, I never asked about his rank……it might be around B or A, right?

「Well then, as for other 6……some people can make up teams, then defend and stall them……but that won't work in this situation」

As expected. The men and women of the knight squad, both have lost their fighting spirits.

「Yeah, but we can't call that weak or miserable. That reaction is the normal one」

「It sure is, right. And in that case……how about it Minato-kun who just insta-killed one? Can you handle the other five somehow?」

「……It would be more easier if all came at me at once」

「Will you fine then?」

Zari was surprised because he was expecting an answer『It will be impossible!』.

No well, didn't I ask before to Suura-san that『will other of them will come if I defeat it』, right?

At that time, I already knew the existence of their group……so I thought it would be less troublesome if they all came at me at once.

No, it wasn't like I would fight them easily? Even I would have trouble fighting eight or nine of flying demons.

But in situations like these, it was more difficult to fight while protecting the comrades.

Furthermore this time, not only enemy numbers are big, but so are the comrades.

To add in more, almost all have lost fighting spirit, and wouldn't be able to run easily or even defend.

If the morale was high, then having more numbers would be good, but the moment it turns like this, they only turn into burden. Well, in this case, they can't be blamed.

Suura-san would take one, Zari would on one or maybe two, and others me……it would be difficult to fight while protecting everyone.

At times like this it sure could be painful that I couldn't use magic. At most I could take on two or three at once, in that time if other grasshoppers attacked others, then I wouldn't be able to save them.

So, protecting everyone till the end was even more difficult.

Against these many, protecting Elk alone was my limit.

……And, one more thing had been on my mind from before……

「Suura-san, it's about that one, the first from other side……doesn't it look somewhat different?」

In front of the place my finger pointed……there was one individual completely different from all other『Exceed Hopper』s.

Its shell was very dark green compared to others, the body too was big.

It even had thorn growing on its legs, which made it look more fiendish……and maybe it might be imagination, but there seemed to many fangs inside its mouth.

「Ah, I've heard about it」

Zari said.

「Among the Exceed Hoppers, rarely, some『subspecies』are born and have dark green body color. They not only have powerful physical ability compared to normal species, but also has magical power」

「……It's rank is?」

「If I remember correctly, it is A」

「……Didn't want to hear that」

……『Exceed Hopper』, furthermore『subspecies』, this was certainly……

Ah, that's right, I thought I had heard this name somewhere. This was from that『List』.

That『Become an Adult! Subjugation Target Demon List』which I got from Irene-san the other day.

It was written in there, no wonder it was strong.

So it was the sound source for that more loud sound of wings.

Anyhow, I couldn't help but say that the current situation was really bad.

There were 8 exceed hoppers in air. Rank B.

Furthermore, one of them was an『subspecies』of rank A.

On the other hand, everyone had lost their fighting spirit. And from the fact there was no reaction from those inside the carriage would also mean the same thing.

The only ones who could fight were Suura-san, Zari and me. Just us three.

Elk had some past experience during Naga, so she was better than others, she was also standing on her feet……but her fighting strength was not much.

Defeating them all while protecting everyone could only be considered as herculean task. Running away was even more impossible.

In that case……

「Suura-san, Zari, Elk, I will say this only once, so please listen carefully」

Calming my heart to the extent I could, I called out to everyone.

I would talk to Suura-san too, so I spoke in formal tone.

「? What happened, Minato-dono?」

「Did you come up with some strategy?」

「……Minato?」

「No, not a strategy, but……」

At that moment,

「D-Don't fuck wit me! With this……With this, I will die!!」

「I don't fucking care about it! I-I'm running away from here!」

「O-Oi wait! Let me come too……」

When I thought I heard those voices……the two delinquents tried to run from one carriage on the other side in a state of confusion after being cornered by a single exceed hopper.

No, they had already started to run.

But,

「Oi wait! If you become separated from here after going out right now, it will only……」

Before Suura-san finished speaking,

As expected, one of the grasshopper came flying down with its mouth wide open for eating the two prey who got separated from our group.

Suura-san took her stance and released the arrow in a second, her expression said 'words won't help but hands will', but because she released the arrow in a second, she wasn't able to clad it in magic, so it struck the hard shell and fell down.

Exceed hopper opened its mouth for biting of the heads of two without caring about what happened right now……and the next instant,

「……It can't be helped anymore, eh」

SFX: *Dogoo*

Along with a dull sound, on its flank something collided……it couldn't bear the shock, and went flying away, and soon crashed down.

「「「!?」」」

Suura-san and others looked while being surprised at what just happened. Something fell from the stomach of grasshopper who wasn't able to move as it wanted while its body twitched. The thing fell on the ground with a thud.

It was a black……iron ball.

It was the iron ball I threw just now, its size was two times bigger than clenched fists and had a same colored iron chain attached to it.

One end of the chain attached was being gripped by my hand.

This chain-attached-iron ball too was an item I got from before leaving the home…… and was stored in the belt since beforehand.

In this situation it couldn't be helped, and I had to resort to using this.

……This really is dangerous.

And……that too which I will use from now.

「Suura-san, please give out orders」

「Orders?」

Suura-san seemed like she hasn't caught up with the situation. Her voice had somewhat bewilderment.

But, ignoring it, I simply tell her what to do.

「I'm gonna go rampart from now. If, at that time others are near me it would only act as hindrance, so let them take shelter near the carriage or inside them. Even so it might be dangerous, so everyone should lay down. I will try to not get carriage and everyone involved」

「……? What are you trying to do?」

「I will omit the explanation. You two over there……」

Before finishing saying, I moved my hand which wasn't holding the chain towards the iron ball lying on ground.

When I did, the iron ball hovered in air and returned to me.

I catched it, after holding the side with iron ball attached, I had lot of chain space, so I threw the other side, it collected the two delinquents lying on ground like a lasso, then I suddenly pulled them back. Just like that, I threw them inside the carriage.

I looked back, to see everyone moving their almost-not-responding-legs and gathering near the carriage, after Suura-san gave the orders without understanding the situation herself.

Alrighty, now I could move more easily. Now, the next.

「Eh everyone. This situation is like this, so I have no time to explain, but pinch your noses」

I said just that.

As expected, everyone looked like they didn't understand anything. Among them, Suura-san and Zari and half of them did as ordered while showing bewilderment.

Elk too did it while knowing what I was going to do, she knew it because of everyday training.

It was good that I showed her this before.

The other half people still haven't pinched their noses, but I couldn't wait anymore,

「——Here I go!!」

And the moment later, the magic I invoked……invades that place.

「———!!?」

That something which scattered with me as the centre, jolted the brains of everyone present there.

That something, which was similar to『intimidation』used by masters who train in martial arts or something else, spread in the whole surroundings and the atmosphere changed rapidly.

The knights were now not moving even a bit which they could before. Among them, there were people who fainted, maybe mental fatigue too kicked in. As for those who didn't pinch their noses……they all fainted.

Suura-san and Sari were standing somehow bearing the unrest.

Elk was also in a similar position, but because she knew what would happen, so she looked somewhat better.

And, the grasshoppers in the surroundings, though didn't retreat or faint……but they did increase awareness concentrated to me.

The me, who was the centre of their attention……was clad in a mist of black and violet, the color of something like darkness.

[ET: Go and see the picture of MnD on project page. That thing on his hand is the one he is using currently]

It was the attribute which was my speciality, the『darkness』magical power.

The power didn't grew like『earth』, and speed to lost to『wind』. The destructive power or additional effects like『fire』and『lightning』, weren't present within

『darkness』.

However, it was too powerful to regard it as jack-of-all-trades-master-of-none. It was endowing me with an all-rounder magical power.

This power could increase, physical strength, agility, reaction speed, defense power etc all at once. I hadn't used in a while, but this was my original-by-nature power.

As for why I hadn't used it till now, the reasons were three.

First. I didn't had any need to use it.

I had been able to get through with just pure magical power filling without any changing in attributes.

Second. It was a really rare power.

Compared to other six attributes, the people having talent to use『darkness』and『light』were extremely rare. Statistically, there were chances of a person having them in the ratio of one person among several hundreds.

So, if others knew I could use something rare, others would pay attention to me, and some noisy people would come to me.

Third. I didn't use it because『darkness』was different from『light』and was an evil power used by devil within the country and other places. So, it was detested.

It seemed like something scary and troublesome like religion would target me.

[ET: Demons (魔物) devil (悪魔), I don't know if it was the typo by author, though this guy does have many in all chapters]

[AK: could you give me the line, I don't think it is a typo, I would like to check if my idea is correct, because if i remember correctly you can use both but the implication is somewhat a little different]

[ET: Till now the author never used devil but demon, and they both are different things. Devils are evil spirits or some more bigger entity while demons are evil fodders (mutated animals)]

I had been told about the second and the third by mom before……she told me not to use them, and even without using them I was able to get by, so I hadn't used it till now.

But, right now, the opponents were strong, numbers big, so just in case I used it.

Though I used this magical power……it had no relation with that『intimidation』just now.

More precisely, wasn't intimidation something like colliding spiritual power and was only used by masters?

And, in fact, I couldn't do it. Never knew the way to do it, after all.

No, I did try to do it during my training with mom, but unfortunately, maybe because of my youthness and inexperience, I wasn't able to do it.

So, I made this magic as its alternative method.

And the name was『Magic Pheromone』

『Pheromone』……the secretion substance released by living things, for several hundreds of things like, warning, courting, commanding, tranquility etc, acts upon the parts of brain directly to give out some effects.

Tampering those parts with magical pheromones to give out even more effects on my own will, that's what this magic was about.

A typical example of that would be the『intimidation』I just used.

This technique releases magic from my body of one sort of pheromones such as『warning pheromone』, so by increasing the effect on parts of brain, for intimidating and scaring opponent, this magic could give out the effect same as『intimidating』someone.

It was an colorless, tasteless and odorless magic, so it couldn't be sensed by anyone neither can be defended. It affects the instincts directly, so if something went wrong,

it would give out something more powerful than a normal intimidation.

But, it had a fault, because of that I hadn't used it even once.

This magic, upon being released from my body couldn't be called back, and could tamper with demons and people present in the area indiscriminately. Adjusting too was almost impossible.

In addition, though it had magic blended it was a chemical substance, the scattering point……in other words, the person near my body would have a more stronger effect while the person far would have less.

So, if something went wrong, the comrades near me would be strongly affected by it and turn incompetent. Just like the knights who fainted.

And, it didn't reach completely to the enemy far away……

But in this situation, the knights would only be burden if they moved while they wouldn't be of any help currently. So for stopping it I used this.

Incidentally, pheromone could be sensed by nose, so I had them pinch their noses…… so how was it? It might have been better than not pinching the nose, right?

……Well, whatever.

Well, now, the grasshoppers had stopped their movements due to bewilderment.

I held the iron ball in my hand with tight grip strength for throwing it towards the grasshopper who was the most far away.

「First one to attack wins!『Linear Cannon』!!」

[AK: I would almost say leave it at romaji same as above]

[ET: So you say I leave it as Rinia Cyanon (リニアキャノン)?]

Immediately after,

The iron ball which was in my hand went flying with unbelievable momentum and speed towards the grasshopper which was hovering in air and was far away.

Then, the chain was tensed due to the attack, I swiftly pulled it back……and swung it horizontally.

「———Orrrrrrrrraaaaahhhhhhhhh!!!」

Originally, iron balls with chain were to used by using centrifugal force to attack, but sorry for being rude to that theory and using brute force.

In accordance to my pulling horizontally, the chain and iron ball drew a horizontal track in air, and mowed down all the grasshoppers in that track.

In doing so……the trees present in the attack too were mowed down quite cruelly. I'm sorry.

As soon as the front half calmed down in a semicircular shape, I jumped right above.

If I swung again, there was chance that it would engulf Suura-san and others near the carriage, so I changed the trajectory.

So, after jumping to height on which they wouldn't become obstacles, I swung with all my strength.

「——One more coming!!」

Without changing the momentum, I revolved once then once again.

While shifting the trajectory slightly, not changing the speed and momentum during swinging, the iron ball rampaged freely.

With a total of three rotations, it hits six out of eight grasshoppers, including the subspecies and they all crashed down.

I couldn't get them all, but this would be fine.

Aiming at one of the left two, I revolved once again and threw the iron ball along with

chain towards it, just like in hammer-throw.

The grasshopper which was feeling relaxed for being away from the attacks before suddenly got a hit right in the face.

Just like that, the iron ball sank into it making a big hole, and the grasshopper died.

At that moment, the other one jumped at me with happiness because I had thrown my weapon.

……But, its awareness was really immature.

I towards that grasshopper……more precisely, I moved my one hand towards the grasshopper which died right now, with this last guy in between us both, and in the next instant,

While making a dull sound, the iron ball which was inside the corpse of grasshopper came flying in and hit the rear flank of this last grasshopper diagonally.

Just like that, the iron ball came flying to me along with the grasshopper.

It was attracted to me due to the『magnetic force』which I made by using『earth』and『lightning』.

It was one of the techniques I developed during the training with mom, It could only attract or repel, but I increase the speed in a straight line just like how I did before, in short it could turn into a Coilgun.

[ET: Coilguns are distinct from railguns, as the direction of acceleration in a railgun is at right angles to the central axis of the current loop formed by the conducting rails. In addition, railguns usually require the use of sliding contacts to pass a large current through the projectile or sabot but coilguns do not necessarily require sliding contacts. By the way, using coilguns is really good, you guys should also make it at home (oh a video how it works). Oh, be sure not to use on humans, the speed is still around that of a revolver (somewhat old one), ofc you can increase the speed. Furthermore, it is legal unless and until you don't do shit around with humans and animals]

Well however, that wasn't an『iron』ball, but a magic item I got from mom, it was made from a special magical metal.

That iron ball left the body of grasshopper, eventually only the iron ball came flying back to me. The place which seemed to be the place iron ball struck it was cruelly smashed in and it wasn't able to fly properly.

However, it wouldn't be able to live easily if I left it. So, I would finish it.

I swung the iron ball by pulling the chain part, and with that momentum strike it from top.

That iron ball used centrifugal force, and struck the grasshopper then both went flying down on the ground. An about 10 metres wide, big crater was formed.

The ground of the surroundings did shake as though there was an earthquake, but fortunately, the carriages were not toppled over neither broken. With this the last two done in.

With the three rotations I did before, 3 were dead, but somehow other 3 were alive.

『Subspecies』too was among those three.

Then suddenly, from the edge of my vision, a blue arrow came flying and struck one of the living grasshoppers. It struck precisely in the gap of shell, the throat.

I looked the direction arrow came flying in, and as expected, Suura-san stood there.

She was standing while holding her favorite bow, and was paying attention towards the grasshopper she just shot the arrow towards.

Immediately, she puts her hand on the bowstring though she didn't had any arrow.

Then, an arrow of the same color as the magical power in her hand was made nocked on the bowstring, then released just like a normal arrow.

It struck in the same way as before, and killed the living grasshopper this time.

「Fuu……was that unnecessary for you?」

「No, it was splendid. But still, an arrow of magic……you could even do that」

「Though it has power , but it has heavy magic consumption as you can see. It is not thing that can be used always」

「Minato-kun, you can use various sorts of weapon, right」

Said Zari from the side.

He hadn't attacked yet, but because he was in fighting stance, it seemed like he too was prepared for fight.

The two face the other grasshopper which was about to recover from damage.

「We will take care of that one somehow. So Minato-kun……can you please on that boss?」

Saying that, Zari glanced that boss.

The exceed hopper (subspecies) which was in more good form even after getting hit by the iron ball.

It must have some intelligence, that's why it hadn't come at us even after recovering and was waiting and observing us.

And the even more bizarre thing was, the cloud of sand rising with a vortex of wind, which wasn't present before.

There were no after-effects from the battle before too, then that is……

「Minato, isn't that……『wind』magic?」

「Oh, Elk-dono you have magic perception talent?」

「Rare, isn't it? Knowing the existence of magic is different, but people who can even sense the attribute of magic are really rare……well, that one magic is more obvious, so it can be seen just by looking」

Huh? Is that true? I didn't knew.

Elk and I were able to discern the attribute of magic normally, so I never thought much about it. We both easily noticed when the demon opponent used magic.

Maybe, Elk has really great talent in magic realm?

Well, the thing that grasshopper was clad in was without a doubt『wind』magic.

Just like Zari said, that thing was obvious even by looking, now that I think about it, there was low resistance compared to other grasshoppers when I used iron ball.

Seeing the wind swirling around it……makes me thing it might be some sort of wind barrier, or maybe not?

Let's check it.

Again collect the iron ball with magnetic force, and threw it towards the subspecies using『Linear Cannon』

Then, from the moment I moved my hand which was holding iron ball, the wind around subspecies became violent and assaulted the flying iron ball.

Result? Though it wasn't completely blocked, but it was repelled after striking the shell with a thud. This time it didn't even take a damage.

「It really is wind barrier magic」

Sure enough……argh, so envious.

「I threw with lot of power……it sure has high defensive power」

「It was indeed fast, and that iron ball too seems heavy. How heavy is that?」

「Around 150 kg」

「Eh, that much!? But only has the size of a fist!?」

Yeah. That much.

Though, that iron ball had a terrible nature which completely disregards laws of physics, that was『weight increase upon pouring magic』.

Normally its weight was 5 kg without any magic inside it, but at most it could increase to one ton.

Current weight of that iron ball was more than 150 kg. That was the reason I was able to make the grasshoppers crash even though they had hard shell and were 3 m long.

Incidentally, the defensive power to block that attack completely……subspecies, along with magic, you rock.

It might be different, if I put in more magic and attack on its vitals or when it might be flying.

But that would be too much of a hassle, and I could sense that the fight on Suura-san and Zari's side was about to end,

「Bring it on! One-on-one, no tricks allowed!」

I『store』the chain-attached-ironball in the belt, and after slightly long time I clenched my fists.

At that moment,

SFX: *KisHHAaaaaAAAaaaAA!!*

The subspecies raised a cry that didn't seem of an insect, and came flying at me after kicking the ground. It might have seen this as a good opportunity, now that weapon was out of my hands.

It wasn't so fast that I couldn't dodge it, but I just had no reason to dodge.

I would make the other side move aside……with brute force.

「Don't you damn……come here!」

I punched it from side like a hook while it was approaching me with the momentum and intimidation of a missile.

[ET: wrestling lariat, but in this case from the side]

The hook which completely grabbed the face of subspecies, was thrown to the left side of road while making side rotations .

Tohugh cracks appeared in the shell……but the subspecies reformed its posture within air and upon landing glared at me.

At that moment, the whirlpool of wind got stronger, and due to the cloud of dust near its feet my vision worsened.

But, it didn't seemed like it aimed for a smokescreen effect from that. It was making『KissshaaaAAAAaaaa』like crying sounds and footsteps too were noisy.

……However,

The wind that rose up did work that made want to wish that it was just a smokescreen.

The wind swirling around, condensed in front of grasshopper……and the next instant,

That compressed air made a bursting sound then scattered, and then came at while cutting and gouging out the ground —Due to cloud of dust, I was able to see its trajectory—. There were sharp scars as though the ground was cut by blade.

Don't tell it's wind blades!? Is that some sort of wind attack magic!?

Though it won't hurt me even if I get hit by that, but for just in case I evaded with a

side-step……then a more surprising attack came.

One of the thorns growing on the front legs (the two foremost legs)……came at me like tentacles.

That too, not something like sea anemone which would be drawn of package of R-18 games……but it was something like that of a centipede along with an additional solid『shell』, frankly put, I didn't knew if it was right to even call it as tentacles.

It seemed like hard, sharp and jagged. It was something like tail of lizard and snake and looked fiendish and strong, but I surprisingly I couldn't sense any killing power in it.

I fall back but the tentacles followed, so in turn I diagonally jumped forward and before the tentacles turned around to follow me, I leapt back.

A second later, though I evaded the tentacles, but the place which got attacked — the place I jumped away from— had the all the trees smashed.

Oh that was quite a brutal attack……iron might not be useful against it.

I see……it sure had power, so that's why Irene-san had put its name on『List』.

Simple horsepower aside, wind magic and tentacles……and mobility by flying in sky, taking all that into consideration told me that its comprehensive offensive ability was higher than that of『Naga』.

There was no confirmation that what I just saw were all of its attacks……it would be dangerous if the fight was prolonged and I let my guard down.

Then this time, it unfolded the wings, and flapped them……then the air converged and it came towards like a cannonball of air.

I read the trajectory thanks to the cloud of dust, but……it was faster than the wind blades and I got hit by it.

Its power was not inferior to the charge of『Naga』……but!!

「S.I.M.P.E.I.S……Beeeeesssssttttttttt!!!」

[AK:?????? dont get that]

[ET: It says 'simple is best']

I daringly to compete in a power competition!

I put magical power in my legs to stand firmly and bear the attack for not getting blown away by the shock.

I cut through it, or rather pushed it away and start a frontal charge……the moment most of the air was gone, I kicked the ground with full force.

The tentacles came this time but I used them against itself!

I catched them which were trying to tear in two pieces from middle and pull them.

The tentacles was considerably powerful, so when I pulled, the main body too came flying in.

The surprised (it looked like) subspecies somehow stood back, but our distance was now half than that of before, furthermore its stance was broken. Lucky chance.

In no time, I approached it, and this time I used my hand like a sword to strike in the gap of shell present near its throat.

My hand sword pierced till my wrist and half elbow was inside it.

Like that I put power in my whole body, especially in shoulders and hands, and stand up while raising the skewered subspecies.

And, with that big body above me……

「Fire up!!!! Something inside of meeeee!!!」

I concentrate the fire attribute magic in my hand stuck inside it……and burn the body

of enemy from inside.

Though『Exceed Hopper subspecies』has a hard shell, but if the soft meat parts, the insides of its body were burnt it couldn’t stand a chance.

Maybe its body was burnt from inside, black smoke started to come out of the mouth and other body parts. It struggled by moving its six legs.

From the gaps of shell, sometimes fire too seeped out.

However, that was for only some seconds.

Along with agony death cries, it convulsed and stopped moving.

I got the feeling of the meat inside its body gotten soft and crispy too, just like yakiniku……quite difficult to explain that strange feeling.

After waiting for it to die, I roughly swung my left arm and threw that well-roasted corpse.

It landed in the middle of road while making a dent.

……I shouldn’t have thrown it in the middle. It would only be a hindrance.

Thinking that, I raised it once again to throw……but then I realized.

……It had magical power.

Furthermore, though it was too big, but was a『bug』, so it would be good, right?

Alrighty, though it was demon it too have『life』. I have to use it effectively.

I looked towards the carriage, confirmed others had completed their work,

「Alva thanks for the wait, here is you meal!」

Then called my new comrade for having this little, no very much wonderful lunch.

Chapter 34 - Magic and Poison and Memory

「I as prepared for this, but……looks like it’s going to turn troublesome again」

「Isn’t it fine, not like there is some disadvantage. Well, being the center of attraction is indeed not a comfortable feeling」

Here is city of Volca.

We returned to the inn at full speed, asked Tanya-chan to refuse every sorts of interviews and every other thing, and were stuffed in the room. After that we retreated into our room.

……I don’t want to go out for a while.

We had to report about the quest within the time limit……that is by day after tomorrow, so we would have to go to the Guild for giving the wrists of Kobold as proof.

But well, waiting a little bit more for the situation to calm down would be better than going to guild which is currently in great turbulence. At least it would be good if I can think like that.

Currently, the Guild was bustling with activity, so it was doubtful if they would even pay our quest any attention.

So like that we returned to our rooms in inn, and were in the middle of relaxing ourselves from fatigue caused by fighting for many hours.

☆☆☆

After going through the fierce battle, we returned to the city of Volca and were engulfed in a great uproar, to the extent that the uproar caused during the『Naga』-case seemed as a joke.

Well, thinking the things that happened during the time of our return, it was natural.

And, we also brought the corpses of the『exceed hopper』which had a good condition by tying them up in the carriages.

Seeing that, the city-people were noisily talking while standing on the edge of street.

During that time, the center of defense, me (dressed in black), was riding the leading carriage, so I was seen by other adventurers who crossed by us.

That reason, and the fact Elk said she was really tired, were the reasons we returned to city, dashed to inn and secluded ourselves in the rooms.

As the platoon leader, Suura-san, was dealing with the after effects related to this case and was reporting about it. It’s not like we had heard about that, but she said it would become like this.

The smuggling of『blood maple』was discovered, furthermore, there was great possibility that due to the landslide this time, the ecosystem of the『Crimson Forest』might have changed. So it is needed to report back to the Guild and the Army about this information/intell, after that there is also the need to investigate and explore about this.

, therefor is also a need for (recon)/(investigation and exploration) the area. [AKs alternative version]

Management sure is very tiring.

Those two delinquents, after returning to city, stuffed themselves in their rooms, it seems.

Though they were injured but not to the extent of a grave injury. Rather than physical injury, the problem might be a mental shock.

For Suura-san and other knights from the guard troop, it is like a good thing, that haughtiness is shivering in the rooms.

It is understandable, after all they are rank D and were cornered by the crowd of rank B or rank A.

After calming down, at a later date, they will carry out the hearing along with us.

Furthermore, I heard this accidently from the subordinate members, that Suura-san asked the person in charge to delay it for a later date because she was caring about our circumstances.

And the last, Zari.

Different from those two, though he had signs of physical fatigue, but he had mental shock or fatigue.

After hearing that we would be taken later for hearing, he left in a nonchalant way.

Though based on the result that they were saved, the subordinates of Suura-san too had mental damage inflicted on them.

And, due to the fact he had covert ability which couldn't be sensed by Suura-san and the fact he said that he could fight 2 exceed hoppers, makes me feel like he really isn't some normal person.

Though I didn't confirm his face, but from the smell, I can affirm that it was Zari hiding there, on that morning……

He didn't seemed to have intentions to peek or be violent so I left him, but thinking more, this in itself is more mysterious. Just why was he sneakily roaming around?

It bothered me, but there was no answer coming out, so I decided to forget for the time being.

☆☆☆

So, currently, Elk and I were resting in the room of inn.

I am giving the food to Alva, while sitting on the bed with the『Necromicon』in my one hand.

[AK: reminds me of the Necronomicon or is it the same book] [ET: What is Necronomicon?]

I am reading it, while making sure, that the grilled meat of the『exceed hopper subspecies』which Alva was eating while perching on my shoulder, doesn't fall on the book page.

Alva was eating the meat of the dark green grasshopper with an happy expression.

Moreover, he was liking the rare-grilled parts more than the not-grilled ones. Just like a gourmet. It makes an unsatisfying expression while eating raw parts.

So, when it urged for seconds, I grilled it with fire magic and gave the meat.

……I just gave a part, though……

Then, Elk, who was maintaining the weapons while sitting near the table in the center of the room……

「Hey, it has gotten dark, isn't the light too less for reading a book?」

「? Is that so? I have no problem though」

「Currently you don't have, but if you keep on reading books with less light your eyesight will get worse」

Well, certainly, it had become hard to read, but that is only for normal people.

Furthermore, currently Elk was repairing the weapons……more precisely, she was in process of sharpening the aforementioned『dagger』.

Since it was an blade, so caution is needed, in that case, good light source for looking

at it would also be needed. It would be bad if her hand slipped and she got hurt.

Incidentally, the whetstone used to sharpening that『dagger』to is a special one, but we got it somehow after consulting Noel-neesan.

It was quite pricy, but not something we couldn't afford.

So, ever since then, on every opportunity she found, Elk started to sharpen her『dagger』, maybe because of sharpening effects, the original lustre of crystal blade was returning bit by bit.

I don't want that hard-working Elk to get hurt, so I took out the candle (a box with a dozen of them) I had bought before.

Then, I placed them in the candlestand used for holding candles.

This is a candle made from magic for『illumination』purposes, so it was brighter than normal candles. But, it had a brightness like that of a naked light bulb, so I used three of them.

Then, the moment I was about to light up the candles, Alva, who was perched on my shoulder, flapped its wing and started to fly.

Like that it neared the candlestand, and hovered in air without making flapping sounds.

Elk and I were watching it thinking what it is going to do, then it moved the front of claws near the part used for lightening up the candle.

There, I finally understood what Alva was going to do……the next moment,

SFX: Poof

A miniscule amount of flame came out from the front of claws, and light up the candle.

「Whoa, this is great, so you really can use it now, you're really great~, Alva」

「……？　……!?　!!?」

I looked at Elk only to find her completely stiff while making an expression as if she saw something really impossible with the dagger in her hands.

Oi, it's dangerous to blank out with a blade in hand, don't you know?

……Ah, I see. I never told Elk about Alva.

Apparently, Alva somehow learned the way to use fire magic by seeing me make fire with magic.

For me, I just fill fire magic in my hands and make it damn hot, so I can fire up anything with just nearing my hand to the object,

But before was with a snap.

In that way, I could fill magic in my finger, then with a finger snap, make sparks of high temperature to ignite the candles or bonfires.

It's easy to imagine and looks cool, so based on my mood, I could alternate between the two choices.

And, I could maintain the heat in my fingers for a long time.

The grilled meat which I gave to Alva before was grilled in this way.

Seeing that cycle, apparently, Alva learned it on its own.

Though there was no finger-snaps, but it released somewhat powerful flames, currently, it was even able to grill the somewhat heated meat given by me.

At first, it failed in controlling the spark power, so the meat was charred.

……Even though I explained, but for some reason Elk didn't agree to it.

「……No, that just cannot happen. Normally, it just is impossible」

「Even if you say that……well, doesn't it mean that Alva has really good brain, right? It

looks like it can understand our words」

「That is the strangest thing……. The demons with that much intelligence only appear after crossing a certain high-leveled line……in the first place, learning magic, though easy one, by just watching, that feat is even impossible for humans. Even more, not even two complete days have passed since its birth, right?」

……Well, yeah, she's right.

If magic could be copied by just watching a few times then……people aiming to be apprentice of renowned mages would be extinct……

It hasn't been much time since Alva was born……it hatched out from egg in front of my eyes.

Thinking carefully, why can it understand everything in a conversation and our words, though it shouldn't have had connections with language?

Isn't it like asking a japanese who doesn't know other languages, to listen to a professional russian talk and reply in perfect russian, right?

And, I don't even know what sort of demon Alva is…….Suura-san too, Zari too, didn't seem like they about it.

It also had the unique nature of liking magical substances. Looks like I would have to look into it.

「Hmm……just what are you」

PiiiiiiIIIiiiIIiiII?

I tilted my head.

Alva too tilted its head by imitating (?) me. ……It's more and more owl-like.

「……You guys are quite intimate」

Thanks for that.

PiiIIIIiiIII!

☆☆☆

「I thought about this randomly」

Why are you even thinking , I would not ask it.

「I thought it during the training, that you can use various things, right? Darkness magic aside, like pheromone……even demons get pale due to that, right?」

「No, you don't have to say that much……it has different varieties and different activation sequences」

「Eh? Really? Aren't you making it with magic?」

「Well right……」

Strictly speaking, it is about the process at start……something like a『trigger』. Now that I think, I never talked about it.

I too am, more or less, related to『succubus race』.

Within their inherent ability, something called as『charm』exists.

The nature succubus' have was『energy intake』. This power assisted for that nature.

It was the power to seduce a man for doing as they want……a power like hypnotism.

However, this power was not completely dependent on magic.

My power is a power closely related to the the『sex pheromones』that a living being emits……for seducing the other gender person.

My『Magic Pheromone』are not pure genuine『Pheromone』(do they even exist in humans), but it is with similar power made from from using『Charm』, it is something like quasi-ish magic. Being a part succubus, I too『have』the power.

Though, I cannot use it so easily at all times. After all this and that, it is still a power

requiring『Magic Control』.

But because it was a power that would make me regret not using, I did something and manythings with the secretion substance, by using『Elemental Blood』at full power, and in the end I became able to use it too.

But, in reality, it isn't『Pheromone』, but a『Pheromone-ish Magic』like power.

At first『Magic Pheromone Charm』was created, then I got the hang of it, created『Intimidation』『Warning』『Gather』『Provocation』et cetera, and practiced them.

As for the test subject, I used the bandits which I captured during the bandit extermination when I went with mom. I had even finished the fine adjustments at that time, so it was completed with a high level of perfection.

When I told Elk about it, she admired me, and as though she remembered something,

「So you can actually create substance like that inside the body? Though it comes with magic added」

「Yeah. My body enhancement magic, I cannot tell in details, but it directly affects the vitals and other stuff, so fine control like that is possible for me」

「In that case……can you make poison inside the body?」

「Poison?」

Said that.

Hearing Elk's, casual questions incited by curiosity……triggered something inside my mind.

Elk's question was『If you can make god knows what substances called pheromones, then you can make easy thing like poison too, right?』.

We could use it against demons as insecticides or rodenticides.

No, the question in itself had no problems or strange things.

Certainly, I……If I use the body function control of『Elemental Blood』, then I can make toxic substance using the matter inside my body……perhaps, maybe.

My body, with magic particles existing in the cellular levels, could control the functions of body to the level that other people can never reach. The toxic substances present in the body, which are constantly removed, if collected together and used in an attack……

And, I could also add much more stuff to improve it. If I use the waste materials properly, I could produce sulfur easily……supplementing it with magic would make it more reliable.

But,

All that is fine……still, something is getting triggered in my head.

「……Poison……eh?」

「? So is it impossible?」

「No, it's not it's impossible……but……」

「But?」

「That idea……I've got a feeling that I too have thought about it before……?」

What is it, this seems like a dejavu.

Creating poison from matter inside the body, this idea, seems like I have thought about it before.

I, by nature, am a person who tries to experiment whatever I think is interesting or is interesting for other people. Poison hand or poison mist, fights like these which include poison seem just too much interesting, and it can be put to use with utmost results. This truly enters the category of『Interesting』.

In fact, this is something I would've thought about……so why, in all 10 years of training, had I never thought about this?

No, in the first place, did I really……『Not think about this』?

In real, I could've have『Thought』about it, but have forgot about that time?

I don't know exactly, but that sort of feelings, keeps on rolling in my head after hearing『poison』from Elk. Just why is it so……?

Just what the heck is this gloomy feeling? I don't think I just『forgot』it nice and easy……?

「Hey, Minato what happened? Why are you staring blankly……if you cannot do it then it's alright, I just wanted to hear due to curiosity」

「Eh? Ah, no, it's not like that……sorry, I was thinking something.」

「Hmm, I see」

「As for poison……I will try to research on it. I think it would become a magic for various practical uses」

「I see. But don't try the impossible. If you yourself could not control it, it would be a disaster. It would become a problem, right?」

「You're right. Getting seriously ill by my own poison is something I cannot laugh at easily」

「That and……I too would be troubled」

Ah well, if her comrade became a poison-man, who spreads the poison using poison attacks, it would be troublesome. Let's do the research discreetly.

When I thought that,

Elk muttered『No, that is sure but also……』, blushed……and looked at me with her fascinating reproachful gaze.

「……After all isn't it like that……like even if you remain fine but your body spreads poison to anyone it touches then……」

And, for some reason she stood up while blushing, crossed the room, sat and bed…… and tapped the newly spread bedsheet.

「Look, that……wouldn't it be troublesome? For you and me too. Mainly……in night, here」

「Ah, err, umm……」

Indeed……if it came to that, then well……it would be trouble and inconvenience would occur when communicating, no, it would become impossible.

I too would be pained both on the desire aspect and mental aspect……hm? Would Elk be pained?

「No, idiot, don't misunderstand! I mean……if you became too much worked up then it would be leave me a bad conscience, I really didn't mean it that indecent way……it was only as a comrade, you see!?」

……Huh, this is gonna be bad, right?

This story progress……reminded me about the day of『Naga』.

At that time too, Elk blushed, got irritated and following it……

「I……It isn't like I got worried for your health, neither did I worry that our distance would increase, I seriously didn't think (collapse) about……why did you fall down before I finished speaking!?」

I-It came after 2 long weeks……the sure-kill attack combo (unknowingly) of Elk……!

「E-Elk……try learning……」

「No, why don't you try to become used to this!? We both, on top of bed……have did

many indecent things……so why are you falling down with this……」

Surely, you are right.

However, maybe my brain has been made this way for a girl to my liking that this attack on brain, even with our distance closed within the two weeks, didn't made much difference from that time. Maybe I could never get used to this thing.

This has more stronger effect than the attack of big-serpent, or wind magic of a giant grasshopper, or even the poison of bandits. Seriously.

If these tsundere phrases had an offensive ability, I would be have been killed five or six times.

I'm happy, It makes my heart go harsh, It is cute……with those words my mind filled, but it looks like I wouldn't be fainting this time……

「……! Geez……this why this great idiot makes me worried about him……ah, no, it was lie! Complete lie! I wasn't really worried ab……Huh!?」

「……Spurt」(TN: *nose blood spurt*, not your normal nosebleed)

Ah, I see, so I'm going down this time too.

While looking at Elk with a『Oh no!』written on her easy to read face, and Alva, on the opposite side, with eyes saying『What the hell is wrong with this couple』(?), I wasn't able to hold my consciousness. Looks like this became a pattern.

Is the resistance to night work different from……resistance to『Moe』and『Type』 ……? I don't feel like I could get used to this.

Chapter 35 - The name is『Nevalides』

「I, in the end, came here♪」

Wow!! x2

……Explanation about what just occurred is something like this.

The day after we returned from the『Crimson Forest』,

After eating the breakfast, *knock-knock*, my door was knocked. What is it, thinking that, Elk opened the door……

……There stood, Irene-san, with a face full of smiles. Explanation over.

☆☆☆

A sudden visit by Guild Master.

As for the reason, why she came to the inn for a single adventurer was,

「Yeah, in truth, I got a really tasty snack yesterday, so I will share it with you」

[ET: So first……his mom now this……this one is even more screwed up]

……You're a guild master, right?

With this timing, I had thought that some big problem came up or she was going to inquire us, but……my predictions were kicked right out of the bucket.

I asked if it was fine to not report about this matter to her, the guild master,

「Report? I don't need. Isa-chan has told me the outline, and in truth I don't even need to hear it, but still get what might have happened. It was this『Minato-kun, getting attacked by demons, went on a rampage』, right ?」

Irene-san said that. She just covered the main point in less than damn 30 words. …… Not like she's wrong.

Well, I don't know who that『Isa-chan』might be, but let it like that, just why the hell have you come here nonchalantly for playing?

If a guildmaster, even as a joke, came to an inn for a single adventurer……wouldn't that make a pain-in-the-ass trouble later?

「It's fine, It's fine. I came here while using the magic for recognition obstruction, so one would realise it's me. I have left the work to Barracks, so I'm fine even by ditching the job, at least till the end of morning」

Another problem is sprouting.

Well, if Irene-san is saying that, I couldn't help but agree to her. Even if I say anymore, it won't make much of difference.

And, thank you for the hard work, assistant Barracks-san.

When she finished speaking, she took out a snack seeming like castella from the different pocket of same pouch.

The size of pouch, and the snack is obviously different……maybe it too is an storage-type magic item, just like my backpack.

After that, while eating that castella-like snack, she heard the story about the current case with an happy expression.

Irene-san said before that『report』wasn't needed, but the talk for chatting was something else, so she lend an ear for killing the time.

While telling her, during the parts that weren't in report or the parts she was personally interested in, she tried to delve deeper in secret.

Like, when the landslide occurred while we were in the small hut (at this point we

hadn’t met Suura-san and others), or like when I used darkness magic, or even when I used my original magic『Magic Pheromone』.

As for the thing about the hut, I didn’t think there was a need to report, so it was fine.

I explained it to Irene-san briefly, then she grinned with satisfaction.

「So that is the case. So you had been fighting with dog, rabbit, lizard, cockroach and even grasshopper」

「Originally it was only supposed to end with dog. But our bad luck」

「Don’t say it like that. Only because you guys took a detour, Suura-chan and others were saved」

Well, that certainly is right, but. When I think about getting in that situation without Elk or me……I felt slight cold.

I, of course, Elk too, displayed lot of efforts in repelling the demons attacking the carriages. At least, more than those delinquent pair.

Those two lacked in basics. So they got injured a lot, and were taken to curing team very quickly.

In that aspect Elk, using basic hit-and-run tactics, fought against demons, her evasion was good from before, but recently, by training with me, those movements have got slightly polished.

So in terms of overall work, she falls behind me, Zari and Suura-san, but still she showed lot of efforts in defending.

Thinking that, it felt like it was for the good. As a hindsight-based opinion, it was good that Suura-san and others didn’t die.

「But……you too were lucky, Minato-kun」

「Eh?」

Irene said that thing suddenly. Luck? Without knowing what she meant, I stared blankly.

In the talk right now, was there any part showing that I got lucky?

When I asked,

「Minato-kun, do you remember about the『List』, I gave you before?」

「? Hmm, that goal list which I don’t want to remember?」

「Yes. Wasn’t it inside there? The subspecies of『Exceed Hopper』」

Ah, yeah, certainly it was there. I think it was the topmost in the subjugation goal list. But, what about it?

「I forgot to tell you, but the demons in that list, become stronger as you go down, so the first demon you met in was the weakest, that’s why you were lucky」

「……Oh, so that is the case」

I can’t say anything to Elk with an expression saying『For real!?』.

It was the weakest, eh. In the list?

Well I did thought it was too weak for being the level of monster which would make me recognised by mom.

「And, though it doesn’t happen here but……in far countryside, a rare group of around 100 subspecies appears after many years. Sometimes, a request for punitive force reinforcements are made in guild, so how about going there at that time?」

「……Well, after Elk becomes more stronger than right now」

「I just can’t, hell no!!」

A shout filled with grief and despair. I’m joking, joking. I too won’t go to a place like

that on my own will and it's not like we would find a group like that wherever we go……let's stop talking or I get a small feeling it would turn into a bad flag.

Well around here, a group that big isn't present, so I can be somewhat relieved.

And, according to Irene-san, the quest for investigation of『Crimson Forest』has been put out by Guild, and many adventurers with information gathering as objective, have went inside the forest.

Naturally, they had written a warning saying『It more dangerous than ever before』, but almost none of the adventurers dropped out because of it. Let's just pray for their well being.

In this way, we might be called by the guards' side for inquiry, but the Guild, wouldn't delve in deeper about this case. They have decided to close up this case as『An unexpected accident. Now resolved』.

「Though, the rumours about『adventurer in black』is spreading, so Minato-kun, be ready for some hard life」

「Ah, I see now……」

……The case hasn't been resolved for me. Well, when we returned to city in carriage, I was in the front carriage, though as escort, so it was only natural to stand out.

「And, with this case, your rank will have to be raised up again, so, for updation of your guild card, do come to Guild, okay?」

「Yes……」

Well, I had thought it would be like that for levels, but……ah, so depressing.

I recalled about the situation during the case with『Naga』.

Onlookers filled with curiosity, check by fellow adventurers, invitation to other adventurer parties……just because rumours were spread, I had to face all these things before.

Moreover, this is the second round. I do have my criminal record (?) of before, after this one too, I can already feel it being a pain-in-the-ass situation.

I heaved a sigh while thinking that, Elk looked at my attitude with a fed-up expression, suddenly, as if she remembered something Irene-san started speaking.

「By the way Minato-kun, I was bothered about this from before?」

「Come again?」

「It came out in the story before, but, it's the first time you are keeping a pet, right?」

「Ah, yes. I've made it wait in the other room for now」

Yeah, it was about Alva.

Look right now, a guest is here, snacks……edible stuff is also here, so I gave Alva it's food (grasshopper meat) to make him stay obediently in the other room.

In the talk before, I sure did talk about Alva. I think it is a demon, but because I didn't knew its species, I introduced him as a blackish owl-like bird.

Then, Irene-san said she wanted to see it, so I called Alva from the other room. I just called out its name, it came flying and perched on my shoulder. Really intelligent.

Then, Irene-san, bend forward, looked at Alva, then for an instant, though it might be my imagination, Irene-san showed a serious expression completely different from her normal nonchalant expression. ……What happened?

「You said it ate things with magical power willingly, so I did thought about it, but……」

「Err……Irene-san?」

「Minato-kun, this bird……ah, Alva-kun I mean. Do you know what sort of demon Alva-kun is?」

「? Nope not at all. Elk too said that she didn't knew it」

I sent a fleeting glance to Elk and affirmation came back.

Seeing us, Irene-san said『As expected』.

Does Irene-san know what sort of race Alva is from?

No, she would naturally know. After all, her career is different from ours, she's the great legendary-class adventurer. It isn't strange that she would know about a demon with just a glance.

It is a good chance, how about I ask what race is it from and how to raise it? When I was thinking ridiculous stuff like this,

Irene-san made an expression as if she found it REALLY interesting. Eh, What?

「……In truth, the main reason I came here was because in the report of Isa-chan there was something about an blackish owl loving to eat food with magical power」

「Hwat?」

「And I come here to see this……no, things like this can occur」

「……Umm……?」

「Hm? Ah, sorry sorry, I was just startled. I had never thought Minato-kun you would keep a guy this tremendous, though by coincidence, as your pet」

Eh, what do you mean by that? What is with that suggestive sentence which seriously is ticking me off. What? Is my Alva that bad? To the extent that even Irene-san said『tremendous』about it?

I looked to my side, and Elk too, while looking at Alva, was spilling out somewhat sweat.

……What to do, I wanted to ask about it, but now I have gotten scared to even hear.

No no, wait wait. Jumping to conclusions is not good. Calm down. It can be『tremendous』based on normal public opinion, maybe.

The demon I fought this time『Exceed Hopper』too is said to be『tremendous』based on normal public evaluation……it would be good to that extent, right? ……no, surely there is no doubt it is just too much strange.

Elk's reproachful gaze has been coming to me - no, how the hell am I wrong this time? - and other things too, so I want to first calm down……while thinking that, I waited for an answer from Irene-san, holding my breath.

In the end, this Alva, perched on my shoulder, scratching its feather with beak, is what kind of demon and of what level…… Please, be be upright with explanation……

「Yes, well then, it's a good chance so I shall enlighten you. That Alva-kun, in truth is……」

「-In truth is?」

「……」

「……」

「……」

「……」

「……」

「……」

You're hesitating way too fucking long! That just fucking too long of an hesitation! You're definitely having fun, right!?

Like that, keeping us in suspense for about more than 20 seconds……Irene-san finally opened her mouth.

「Race name『Nevalides』. Rank『Unmeasurable』. It is that one hell of a monster demon. Though it's only a baby bird right now.」

Written as『humans』and『dreams』is a word pronounced as……『fragile』. (TN: This is a pun. Okay, so pun intended)

☆☆☆

『Nevalides』

Habitat: Unknown.

Detailed Ecology: Unknown.

Rank: Unmeasurable.

It is a Devil bird, said to come from the pits of hell, while covered in feather of black and grey. Its appearance is of a slightly bigger black owl an adult bird is, around the size of a medium~large sized bird of prey. Its appearance is not much of a thing, but it's true state is a lot of thing, as it contains dreadful combat ability, it is a legendary-class demon.

It doesn't has much physical strength (according to normal demon evaluation basis), but inside its body is enormous amount of magical power, and it could use a great variety of magic easily with more power. That power could turn a really big forest into scorched earth, and a single bird could subjugate a whole group of more than thousand demons easily.

It has abnormally high intelligence and could understand human language. Furthermore, it could learn a simple magic just by seeing it sometimes, for an easy magic seeing it once is enough, it could even learn the magic just by hearing about it, all in all, it has too much intelligence that it far surpasses human being in imitation aspects.

Due to the high magical power by birth, it loves to eat the meat of demons with magic. Especially, during the time as baby bird, the foundations to growth of magical power aspects are made. Thanks to that, it requires fine quality of food with lots of magical power inserted, in short, it has empty stomach most of times.

Its growth is too fast, after hours from birth it can fly, after one day it can fly without making any sound. By two or three days, it could already use normal magic of fire and other attributes, though being in growth stage.

……All this was the grateful explanation by Irene-san about the identity of Alva.

「Though, this race was said to be extinct about a thousand years ago……but for it to still live in this era, is truly shocking even for me」

Hearing more, apparently, Irene-san too had only read about it in documents during her times as adventurer, so seeing it in real is a first for her too. In that document a picture similar to its sketch was drawn, so she understood by looking.

Why a demon like this, a monster demon which could laugh and kill all those grasshopper group easily, was present in that Ritoras Mountains.

「Maybe, the egg transformed in a fossil, and remained in a dormant state?」

「Dormant state?」

「Yes. Sometimes there are demons like those present. They go in a dormant state with various methods, upon the loss of food, deterioration in habitat, and after entering dormant state……they sleep for many years, tens of years, hundreds of years……at most thousands of years」

「So Alva……Nevalides are like that too」

「Yes. That egg, came out of the place of a landslide, right? Maybe the dormant egg stated working once again with the landslide as trigger, and just before hatching, you guys passed by and picked it up. During dormant state, there are demons, who have strong shells or egg shells」

「So a thing like that exists……」

The thing called demons, are so profound.

A demon like that exists, it's egg rested at that place, and I picked it up……too absurd of a coincidence.

Then, Elk who had been hearing till now,

「But, why was a legendary-class monster present at a place like that? Ritoras Mountains is said to be a mountain for beginners, the levels of demons appearing there is low……naturally, the magical power quantity they have is also low……」

Said all that. Well she is right.

If it is that great demon, then the parent bird would try to feed it the fine quality meat of demon with high magical power quantity……

「Yeah, I also think that is strange, but there are certain reason I can think of? Like for making the baby bird independent as soon as possible and let it start hunting on its own」

I see. Indeed that place is good for even the beginner human adventurers, so for a demon like this, it would become a good training place.

If it becomes insufficient, then it has to become self-independent, go to some other place, and search for a better food……

「Either that or, before that place became for low rank demons, it lived there, and in that era high ranked demons might have lived there. Like, perfect for their training」

「So Alva's egg was given birth around that time?」

「Possibility about that sure exists. But in that case, it would be long before, this country was even made……around many thousands of years before」

So there is a possibility it slept for all that time.

There were other possibilities, but without any proof for the correct one, this talk ended with this.

Then, Irene-san asked me that if I would keep it even after knowing……all that stuff.

Well, a normal person, would lose all the intention to keep a pet which is said to be tremendous. Based on danger aspects.

In that case, either selling or presenting it in Guild are two choices.

According to Irene-san, rare demons like those are bought with high price as a research material.

But I have no intention to do that.

After all, I had decided to keep it, with having considered the possibility that it might be a demon. I promised to look after it, took it along with me, and even fed it.

And to throw it away or sell it to Guild, well two words: Fuck it!

No well, other people might blame me for acting that way with a dangerous demon, but I just don't give a shit about it.

I have all the more intention to look after it till the very end. And from what I have heard, the time it would grow up and not need me to look after too is coming near soon.

Hearing that, Elk sighed and Irene-san smiled in a strange way.

Apparently, she had guessed my answer, so she didn't say anything else, though being on the guild side, and easily accepted my answer. Maybe it was because she is broad-minded or due to her personality of being wild and nonchalant.

Elk, didn't oppose it, though it's not like she isn't feeling uneasiness.

It has high intelligence, can understand human language, so it won't become much of a danger if I kept telling it.

However, she also said to properly discipline it.

After saying that, the work of Irene-san was finished. She suddenly stood up and started to leave.

And she wouldn't need us to send her off……just as I thought that,

「Ah, and Minato-kun」

「Yes?」

「I don't anybody does it, but you don't need to be afraid just because your pet is outside the norm, if you raise it while giving lots of love, then it might stick with you only」

Doesn't that implicitly mean『Be careful there are those who don't stick』?

「It's fine. I know one of my friends who has a demon, around the same danger levels as this guy, as her pet (smirk)」

「……Umm, please don't tell me that person……」

For this person to say words like this, at this timing, in this mood only means……

「yeah, your mom」

「Yeah, damn it. really!?」

「Didn't she had? A bird with golden feathers, around this big」

Saying that, Irene-san stretched her hands in left and right side.

……A bird which reaches 2 m upon opening wings……Stork, eh?

On mom's orders, it radiated flames from the wings, released beams from its mouth. When I was weak, and went in forest, in substitute for mom, it escorted me, against demons I couldn't fight against, it kicked their asses.

I had thought it wasn't any normal demon, but……

「It is called as『Phoenix』, and is a sacred bird, completely opposite of『Nevalides』. It's name was……I think it was Stork, maybe?」

In the traditional folklores of some places, Phoenix are called as『god of light』and Nevalides as『evil god of darkness』, certainly they fit the phrase 'light and shadow'. Of course rank is unmeasurable. On theory is, that upon dying it could revive from even the smallest fire, it is a type of immortal bird. This information is the same as of『Immortal bird』the『Phoenix』in my previous world's fantasy genre stuff. (TN: Immortal bird means phoenix, but the reason I didn't write it was because Phoenix has many ways of being written in Japanese and they all different meanings, which english words cannot teach)

Irene-san, after saying information that only increased my mental fatigue, left with a satisfied expression.

Still what sort of karma is this. Mom and stork, a demon same as that would come to me, almost like the same side of the coin idiom……

Well, I did felt dreadful coincidences, but it's all good. Alva is Alva.

For the time being, I thought to be a good friend to this lovely guy facing its round and cute eyes towards me.

Chapter 36 - A moment at the Tavern

On the night of the day when a typhoon name Irene-san came.
We were, neither in room nor in the dining hall of inn, rather we had come to a big restaurant on the main street.

This restaurant……or rather, it is a shop more like a tavern. It was at a nearby place, only some minutes walk from inn.

Upon entering the tavern, for a moment, the stares of people gathered at me.

Half of those gazes returned to eating their food and friendly chat as if nothing happened, on the other hand, the rest seemed like they recognised me as『person from rumors』.

Some indirectly, while some directly, sent their stares at me.

Well, my clothes are black as usual, so this is only obvious.

My clothes do stood out, so I thought of buy new clothes, but my hair and eyes, both are black. So if I am going to be found out either way, there was no need to change the clothes.

That's why, I had thought some would come talking to me the moment I entered the tavern, but though I felt the stares, nobody came upfront.

Is there some unspoken rule of not getting involved too much, or, is there some dangerous rumor about me flowing……

We walked somewhat further and found the person we was looking for.

「What, I thought that I would be able to see different clothes here. Are those your casual clothes too?」

「Ah, yes. It is one good set of clothes after all」

「It's not the same for me, but there is no reason to change deliberately, right? You're the same too」

「Pu, certainly」

The moment we met the person who invited us, Suura-san, we started that conversation. We sat on the chairs which Suura-san had secured.

Incidentally, today Alva is staying at home. Because, this place is a restaurant.

Then, while chatting I held the menu in hands, and ran my eyes over it. What to ta~ke?

Eh, are you thinking that why I came out of my room when I didn't want it become an uproar?

That is true, but……Irene-san said these words to us.

『It seems like you are trying to be holed up in your room till the time uproar passes by, but I think it has already gotten too late, how about giving up♪』

I was told that flat out, clearly, and so deeply, that I wanted to cry.

However, thinking upon it, it really was a just reasoning.

In the first place, adventurers' occupation is where equation of『Strong = Capable = Famous』works in the truest sense.

It is pretty obvious. If one is strong and superior, then others can leave being escorts or investigator to them with a peace of mind. The sense of security during putting up quests is different from this.

And, more often people are wanting to hear the information about people like them, except the one part of people, others proactively help in information sharing, with gossips and whatnot.

Becoming superior among adventurers means, one would get more trust from Guild and the client, many convenient things would increase, at the same time, the fame would also increase proportionally, and the person's name would be spread far.

Therefore upon becoming famous, one would obviously gather people's gaze, and various sorts of rumors would be made up, furthermore other adventurers would send invitations too.

So to say, this is like the rite of passage an adventurer passes through while becoming famous. Anyone famous, more or less, is experienced.

And since being an『adventurer』, other adventurers would have to approve of it to some extent.

Thinking like that, although it might be awkward, but the strange ones would be us, avoiding all the uproar.

No well, I vaguely knew about it, but in my case, it felt like the way of thinking from the previous life was pulling the strings…… . Originally I, in both previous life and right now too, didn't want to create uproars centred around me.

If I had tread on the steps one by one, slowly becoming famous then it might have been different, but here I have subjugated a rank A monster and gained war results unworthy of an rookie.

Just like I had said before many times, the disadvantages of becoming famous in one shot are more than advantages, so I cannot deny becoming cautious and coward.

But, from now on, that too won't work. For better or worse, I would have to experience the feeling of becoming『famous』. Irene-san told me all this, with just one sentence.

Well, like that, I stopped secluding in the room, and unleashed myself in the night market……this way of speaking seems quite strange, I think.

Then, at the right time Suura-san invited us for eating, so we informed Tanya-chan that we would be eating outside, and like that we had come to this public tavern.

☆☆☆

The reason Suura-san invited us was for thanking us.

This store has, quality OK, quantity OK, price OK……all in all, it is an great store with 3 best things. It neither has some strange high-class feel to it, and seats are plenty. And because the turnover rate is also good, that they don't make customers wait for much time. It is a great store for adventurers. It seems.

And, because of that, lots of sorts of costumes come here, from gentleman-type to violent-type, but because of an unspoken agreement, they all are treated equally.

Well, normal picking up on women do happen here (vice-versa too), but that is within tolerable limits as it just a part of meeting with someone.

In fact, it might be because of this rule, that though they realized me (adventurer in black) and sent stares, but no one has come up.

I need to really thank Suura-san for introducing such a great store to me. Though I had come here with determination, but if other adventurers had come up to me, then it would have become problematic for me.

And personally it is great that food comes fast. Since the previous life, I had hated waiting at restaurants like this, so I always prefer the 3 points I stated earlier.

But still, they are too fast. Almost as fast as a person in Gyudon-shop.

There are various lato barely fine cuisines, are they using magic? For making these. ……It's not completely impossible. Though they wouldn't have made the cuisine itself with magic, but they might have magic to cook the food fast, it's just that I had not yet seen it.

While eating, we had a harmless and inoffensive talk with Suura-san. Like we had relied on each other during time of fight inside the forest, or if our lives were going well.

I should obviously, Suura-san asked me curiously about my strength that『Where did you train?』, but telling her the truth, like about my mom would be a pain-in-the-ass, and there is no guarantee that she would believe it.

So I made do with telling that I grew in an hostile environment.

Though Suura-san wasn't convinced completely with it, but she didn't persistently asked about it.

「Still……being watched time-by-time is not a good feeling」

「It is only natural that it would become like this every time your name spreads. Though I'm not an adventurer, but I too have experienced it. You have to get used to it」

said Suura-san. She was pretty strong in fights before, so maybe the army to has the same system as for adventurers.

「Not that, but being glanced at this many times, kind of kills my appetite」

「Don't lie idiot. You say that with a straight face while ordering seconds of that big meat set.」

Elk retorted with reproachful gaze.

Yeah, well I am currently holding the menu again for re-order the roast-beef-like cuisine because it was just too tasty.

But you see, the impression for taste compensates for the declining appetite and is balancing it……I won't say this because it seems like she would retort again.

「Well don't say like that. Though that line had some points to point out, but if he likes it then it's all fine. Eat without caring for cost」

「No, like I said before, we can split the cost……」

「Then I also said before that it won't help me thanking you. What, though I look like this, I had lots of surplus in my purse because of my post. And, looking a boy eating lots of food, feels good」

While inclining a very-powerful alcohol mug on her shoulder, Suura-san said as such along with a smile.

She also gave me alcohol to drink, but, in truth, I don't like drinking.

It's not like I cannot drink it, but I don't even think it is tasty. The more alcoholic it becomes the more I hate it.

The feeling of the throat becoming hot after drinking……the drinkers ay it is good, but I just cannot bear it. That's why, things like whiskey have already gone from『not good』to『hate』levels.

In addition, I don't like bitter taste and carbonated drinks too, so beer too is no-go for me.

So, I would rather like juice of the same flavor as cocktail. Definitely. The thing I'm drinking right now is also oolong tea……-like tea. I forgot the name already.

Incidentally my sense of taste is the same from my previous life, at first I had thought what if I can now drink alcohol, but I was wrong. I was made to drink it by mom, and from that I found out about it.

Eh? My age at death in previous world? I was an high-schooler? No well, that……aren't there relatives that get in high spirits upon getting drunk? To the extent of recommending a minor to drink. Due to that, on the spur of moment……yeah, I'm regretting it.

Well anyway.

People like this are not rare in this world, but among the army and adventurers they sure are, even Suura-san said she saw it after a while. Well, there might be people who might drink it forcibly for matching up their friends.

But, I know from my previous world's knowledge that『drinking oneself dead drunk』is getting near『true death』, so I think to refrain from drinking at all.

With this and that, I called the waitress, and ordered some more cuisines.

Once again with terrifying speed, stir-fried meat vegetables, potage soup, minced cutlet and risotto was brought. Their names are different, but they seem all too similar to the things in my memories.

「Well, I did say to order without restraint, but……can you eat it all?」

「Ah, no problem. Though looking like this, I'm quite a glutton. Well, I don't have this much appetite always, but because it is tasty……that perhaps my stomach got elated」

Saying that, I stuff my mouth with risotto and minced cutlets. Yeah, freaking tasty.

「Even so, you do eat a lot at the time of eating. Do you have any preferences?」

「Except alcohol I can eat and drink anything. Well I like meat more than fish」

「I see, you sure are admirable. You even know courtesy, not many young'uns have that recently」

Is, that so? I think I'm being pretty normal. Well there are more strong-willed violent bunch of people, so people with my attitude might be rare among the adventurers and army affiliated people. Let's go with this thinking.

「And you have lots of experience in military arts at that age. In near future, the surroundings will sure have a great uproar, don't you think so?」

「Hahaha, well we're adventurers after all. Just like Suura-san said before, looks like I will have to get used to it」

「Hm? Yeah, that is true……」

Then, Suura-san raised the corners of mouth.

「Well, you have good manners, are strong, and are honest. Simply put an excellent man. And an excellent man will either be admired by other men or become their enemy because for women……you're a suitable prey」

She grinned.

「……Come again?」

Err, that means?

Ah, well maybe things like that exist?

「Strong adventurers are『attacked』for that reason, it happens a lot. There are many sorts out there……try not to get involved with them」

「Ahaha……well, yes, thank you for the warning」

I had been told many times about this topic……by mom.

Among adventurers ruffian-like lively people are not only men. Women too are the same. There are elegant, nice and tidy women and also wild lively women too.

Among people like them, they tempt the man they like and goes onto work like that.

There basis for『prey』differ for every person, but according to Suura-san and Mom too, the more excellent the man the better chances of becoming a prey to them.

In other words, I need to be careful because I'm too strong compared to normal standards. For people who even attack people of Rank D and C, I sure will look like a great prey, after all I'm young and very strong.

I see. During the time with mom, I had though this talk as『rubbish』due to『not having any girlfriend for my whole life』in my previous life, but……

After getting out like this, I have seen the people, though they are of different kinds, and am getting used to this reality. It's strange.

Any normal man would be ecstatic, but……no, I too am happy upon getting loved by women, but changing the perspectives lets me recognize it as a starting point of a pain-in-the-ass development.

Seriously, let it be men or women, I still don't want to get in anymore troubles. Like Seriously.

「*sigh* ……well, I have recently left the countryside, or rather my home, so I don't have many people with that sort of relationship, or rather I don't have much girl acquaintances near me」

This is the truth. I have recently left the western-style house called 'my home', and the woodlands called 'countryside', so I don't have much acquaintances.

So my acquaintances in this world, except Mom and Noel-neesan because they are blood-related relatives, would be

Elk who is my partner both in public and private,

And Riin-san, who for some reason, always is the receptionist when I go to Guild and the last one would be the guild master and mom's old friend, Irene-san.

And, ah also Zari who fought with us in that forest. As for those two delinquents, I don't think of them as my acquaintances.

Other than all them would be, Tanaya-chan from inn, or Suura-san.

Huh, unexpectedly the sex ratio is 1: 5…… Well, as the overall numbers they are not much, but the girls are more……

Maybe she too reached the same conclusion, Elk sent a scornful gaze to me. No. This is different, this was not based on my act, but my introvert nature did some plusses and minuses and it became like this, I seriously had no ill inte……

Seeing my reaction, Suura-san broadly grinned……tch, for some reason that smile is getting on my nerves……

「Well, I don't know the circumstances, but in near future it will get rowdy. The person in question seems all-too-optimistic so……try to keep the reins in control」

「……Why are you saying that to me?」(Elk)

「Who knows. But, I don't think that you should think about it as other's problem, but rather pay more attention, it would help」

「……Thanks for the warning」

Suura-san's smile and Elk's reproachful gaze intersected. Moreover, it had become a dangerous atmosphere, why?

In between all that, the waitress suddenly came, and put a expensive-looking alcohol to me.

「? Err, this……?」

I hadn't ordered it, I tried to say that but,

「……Sorry, Suura-san, Elk, I'm going out for a while」

I said that, and drinked the alcohol in one gulp. ……It is still strange tasting.

「? What happened? Toilet?」

「In that case, there is one on the other side」

「Yeah, I will be back」

While informing the two, I stood from the seat……pretended to go towards toilet, and head towards someplace completely different.

With a coaster in hand which was put along with alcohol before. It had words written『I am waiting on the balcony seat of the second floor』.

Ah, coaster, is the cloth or paper that is spread on the table before putting a cup on it. It is used for not leaving stains on table.

On it, the person who sent this to me, had written this message with an oil-based ink.

Then, after reaching the balcony seat where the person it waiting,

「Huh, you seriously came here? I thought you would become vigilant, but this is somewhat unexpected」

「Well……if it was someone I don't know then I wouldn't have come, Zari」

And the person waiting there was Zari.

Though his attire are different, but due to his distinctive hairstyle and the fact he fought with us, though only once, I remember him clearly.

At the time I looked the balcony seats from quite some distance, because my eyes were better than normal, I was able to see him too at that time.

There, after knowing Zari sent the message I came here. Or who in their right minds accept such a suspicious summon.

Zari signaled with his hands to sit. I will hear his request or not, but because I'm making those two wait, so let's reject the offer.

「Ah, I see. Indeed, making a lady wait is ill-mannered. Sorry sorry」

「You got that right. So, I don't want to waste time, why did you call me here?」

「Okay, then without beating the bush. It is just normal salutations, because in future we might rely on each other」

「Do you mean being as friends because we are fellow adventurers?」

「That is half. The other half is……because I have heard something from a person」

What is that suggestive attitude?Who the hell is that『person』?

「Well, thought『that person』is normally free and uncontrollable, but because of the social position, they cannot possibly meet an adventurer frequently, and at times of passing messages to/from『that person』, there is a need for a trustable person. There, I am introduced as person who will accompany you in public and private matters and will be the indirect line connecting you and『that person』. Still, for『that person』to be so courteous to you makes we wonder about your history, just who the hell are you?」

……He just declared it all of a sudden, but it means something like this, eh?

That『that person』introduced Zari to me. As a messenger for themselves, and for me an advisor. Of course, our relationship is only normal fellow adventurers.

I see, courteous to me……oh fuck it, who on earth is『that person』?

Then, Zari guessed I wanted to know the person, and without making any voice moved his mouth……

『I』

『R』

『E』

『N』

『E』

……Ah,『that person』, eh.

「I'm also an adventurer specializing in that aspect. It might sound conceited, but I'm quite excellent in this work. And my face is well-known at many levels」

「That aspect?」

「You can call it Information investigation specialist. it's not frank like a spy, but……we people not only investigate and explore danger areas but also get any information client needs and take rewards upon offering the information. It is also OK for

interpersonal information, of course, we protect the secret of client?」(TN: That infor investigation specialist in short is an high-class information broker)

「……Something like detective?」

「Fighting scenes, to some extent, are OK. Without any request, for gaining rewards, we sometimes roam here and there independently」

Hearing more, he was independently snooping around those traders who were smuggling『Blood Maple』 because there was suspicious air around their shops too.

But because the security was tight - that wrap of『maple』, if it was opened even once others would have known it -, so he wasn't able to confirm the contents inside. The numbers too were always checked, so even after confirming that it was something bad, he wasn't able to take it out.

I see. If it was like he tolerated even after knowing, I would've gotten angry, but in this case, it can't be helped.

So, Zari is superior among those type of adventurers. To the extent that one of the big shots of Guild gave him a work.

Ire……『that person』know his name, so he must quite famous. So it was because of this high abilities that he was able to……peek Suura-san and Elk taking bath that day. I can agree to it then.

……Of course it wasn't to peek Elk or Suura-san but for confirming I and them were not related to that smuggling case.

「So if there is any message from『that person』or if you have any message for『that person』, I would pass it. Of course, you can personally request something from me too. Though it would be need suitable reward, and I will be able to help you」

「……About that」

「Hm?」

「Well, you're personal history is all fine, but……It's hard to trust that『that person』said to watch over me, it's just too crazy」

「Ah, well, you're right……then, look at this」

Then Zari……opened up his bag and took out something. And, presented it to me.

「This……」

「To me……it looks like normal feathers of bird.『That person』was saying you will believe me if I show you this. If you like, you can confirm it when you meet that person……」

「……Ah, Yeah. Got it, I will believe you」

「Oh, really? Well, if you're going to believe then there is no problem. Anyway, nice to meet you, Minato Quadrille-kun」

「Right. Same here Zari……err……」

「I'm Zari Torantor. I don't remember telling my full name to you, so no problem」

Saying that, we shaked hands. I also returned the feathers.

Well, I don't know if his character is made from being in a dangerous faction or because of something else……well I will know in future. If that Irene-san sent him, so though being peculiar, he can be trusted.

The proof for that was, these, golden『feathers of bird』. They are the feathers of『Stork』, I saw them at the time I met Noel-neesan. There is no difference, neither in appearance or scent.

But because there was no letter then it must be because Irene-san wanted me to trust him. It won't be strange for that person to get feathers from mom.

Then, I can trust him for the time being.

Like that, I tried to return back down to the two ladies who were waiting for me, but Zari called out to me as if he suddenly remembered something.

「Ah, that's right Minato-kun, as the sign of our friendship let me present you an information」

「Information?」

「Yeah. Do you know about『other name』?」

……other name?

That, alias type of thing which is added in front of name?

In a sense it is cool, but in another sense it is like incarnation of a person suffering from 8th grader syndrome……so thought cool it is bad. I do want it, but yeah it's better to give up.

Famous adventurers have that. There are also cases people introduce themselves using the other name and surrounding people start making rumors.

Similarly, Zari has『sandstorm』as his other name, though not many people know about it. ……In other words, he might be called as『Zari of the Sandstorm』?

Yeah, in the fight before he did use sand magic, so his other name is fitting him but……no comment.

And, know what, Suura-san too has a other name. Her name is『Frost Archer Princess』. It came because she could use bow and arrow, and ice magic skillfully.

Well, I do think it is cool……but I still don't want it. If I was called as『Minato of the ☆☆』, then I would want to dig a hole and bury myself in it.

When I think about this,

「It is still not well known, but……it is spreading gradually, so it would be good to tell you about it. Even you would want to know, right? Your『other name』」

……Wt!$!$!@#$f?

Chapter 37 - Melancholy of『Black Lion』

Today too, wind-cutting sounds reverberate in the vacant land. It was sparring with Elk, which had already become a daily routine.

Even the recently increased onlookers don't know about this place, so practicing here is just alright!.

It's that usual sight, but there are some things different from before.

First, there is a spectator. Well, the spectator is only Alva.

At the time I am about to leave the house (sometimes even before), it keeps on staring at me intensely. As if saying『Take me too!』

Well, I can leave it at inn, but there is no harm even if it comes here so I take it out here. ……Recently, another reason has been added.

And recently, in non-combat times it rests on my shoulder or sometimes on top of my head. At the time of training and battle, it rests on some appropriate tree in the vicinity.

And the other thing that changed is, Elk. Recently, though gradually, she has gotten able to move more better compared to before.

A week before, her battle posture was full of holes, but now, though it can't be said perfect by any standards, it sure has improved.

Her way of taking balance and movements of legs have improved, her style of hit-and-run has gotten to the point of being conducted with just a single step. The careless jump I pointed out the other day is also almost gone.

Her powerless attacks by just swinging the dagger have gotten better, she is now able to give out an attack with enough back power to follow-up.

The dagger coming at my throat while making an beautiful arc was considerably different from before in speed, sharpness and even power.

As a bonus, her means of attack is not only dagger, she even uses elbow or knees at the right time, increasing her attack frequency, coincidentally the gaps in her form vanished.

I just explained it quite simply, but this is, in truth, quite a great thing.

After all it was only three weeks before, when we both started this training.

Showing this much progress in such less time isn't something a normal person can do?

In the first place training like this show results little by little that the person themself don't become aware of it.

Marathon and Boxing, from Earth can be considered great examples.

Running for months, years, and then finally the time is reduced by several seconds only,

Or Punching the punching bag tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of times and then finally the power of fist is slightly increased.

Like that, the things that take lots of time to complete, Elk did it in just three weeks with visible results already.

Though she has her technical foundations built hard, but still this is impossible without a great talent potential. NO MATTER HOW YOU THINK IT.

If the current Elk fought against a crowd of goblin alone, she would be able to insta-kill five or six goblins without even getting scratched.

Side-by-side she is even training about magic -Though I'm able to do much help here-, going at this rate she is sure to grow even more than I had thought.

With a little more training, she might even fight against Little Beasts.

The studying of that『Dagger』is also finished and it's gaining it original shine little by little, depending on the power of magic, she might be fight even more powerful demons.

「But, still there's a long way to go」

「—-Wha!?」

I dodged the dagger attacking towards my throat, and hold her arm.

Using that momentum, I used the one-armed shoulder throw, and threw Elk.

Most probably, Elk fell on the ground without understanding what actually happened.

Though, the place I chose to throw her was soft with somewhat grasses growing on, it shouldn't be painful as it looks. Though, she is choking on the leakage of somewhat air which was present in her lungs.

「In terms of sharpness, the attack was fine, but the more larger you swing, the larger the gap is, we have to do something about it. In that case, the scariest would be the counter defense just like what I did」

「You mean making a countermeasure for it? For instance?」

「In my case, when I have to counter attack upon getting my fist blocked would be, rotating while dodging and using that momentum to dash out a roundhouse kick, moving inwards and then doing a tackle.」

「Setting the kick aside……I'm powerless, so tackles is impossible. So this is the new assignment.」

「Yep, analyze and cognize it yourself and it's all good.」

I lend my hand to the exhausted-looking Elk for standing up.

She somewhat breathed heavily, but Elk finally stood on her own two feet.

In comparison with that, I am well, still with lots of composure. Even my breath isn't disordered.

「Fuu……you seen too full of composure. Even the time in forest, or when we were fighting continuously, you were always calm. Just how much stamina you have got?」

「Dunno? Now that you say it, in the past some years, other than when training with mom, I have never exhausted my stamina」

「Ah, I see……」

The training with mom was……Yeah, just completely……Yep.

The situation where mom's attack with power more than a bazooka, either fist, kick, with super fast speed coming at me from any direction was just too much. These two situations just can't be compared.

Even more, not only close combat, she would even use magic, and attack from genuinely every direction with no dead angle to be found, unless and until I sharpened all my senses to their extent and used full speed along with power, I would've died easily.

With that much, my stamina and endurance would barely last 30 minutes or so.

Incidentally, during training, mom got too high because of happiness at my growth that she raised the level of her magic and the result……a scorched of 1 km of diameter, where no vegetation would ever grow, was created. At that time, well I almost fucking died.

Thinking about that, everything else just seems like eating a cake.

A full marathon can only be considered as a jogging to me, even a triathlon might be

a good exercise.

……I thought about it after saying, but aren't I myself quite a monster?

While I'm thinking that, Elk said words filled with sarcasm.

「Truly impressive, right……The great『Black Lion』」

Elk smirked.

「……Just stop with that……」

I become dejected.

☆☆☆

『Black Lion』

The『Second Name』of mine, which I was told by Zari the other day.

The originators were, unexpectedly, the subordinates of Suura-san who just happened to be in the carriage on that day.

According to what I hear, that『Recruit-oriented Group』was, well full of new recruits, and are great people who are considered as promising by the surroundings.

Moreover with this matter, where no matter what, not even one person may come back alive, they all made it back alive, this made them centre of topic.

Inevitably, it also reached to my『Adventurer in Black』stuff. Then they even added something totally pain in the ass thing like『If he wasn't there, we would've been exterminated』.

At that time, some person unintentionally said my second name, and with that as the trigger, the name『Black Lion』came into existence.

……Currently, the name is being rapidly spread out.

It says,

That adventurer, without using magic, just uses his fist and legs to beat various kinds of demons to pulp.

It says,

He runs through the battlefield like a gale of wind, mows down every enemy, and even saved his comrades from crisis.

That bravery is exactly like a fierce lion……!

……Rumours like that too, are all what I heard from Zari.

Just F'ing Shut UP!! Don't add that name which seems like Chuunibyou at it's peak! Please I beg you!

Or rather, though I rarely use magic, but didn't I damn use weapons! Ah, well, I think it doesn't matter, but STILL!

And there more stuff to come,

Like, because he can defeat demons empty-handed『Deadly Body』

Like, because I use gauntlets, rod, iron ball, and all have black luster so I'm also called『Kurogane』

And because I wear black clothes all over and because I burnt the last grasshopper with just bare hands, I'm also called『Char-griller』

Starting from Chunibyou it goes away from it, and whats more, I've got lots of other second names for myself. I just damn HATE IT!!

Or rather, the last『Char-griller』, it sounds less of second name and more of insult to me.

While enduring the embarrassment which came by remembering it, I increased the speed for close combat with the person who made me this embarrassed, Elk.

And Elk was just having her hands full with evasion while shouting『Sorry! Really sorry!』, suddenly my ears catch the sound of something nearing us from the brushwood on the other side of vacant land, I even heard the breathing of that animal.

I looked over there only to find, two stray wolves who-god-knows-when entered here and were heading towards us, while drooling, revealing their hunger.

However, their prey wasn't me or Elk, rather……a simple-looking bird sitting at a place slightly away from us, it was Alva.

As for that Alva, it's sitting on the mountain of scraps rather than some tree, while watching the wolves. Surely he noticed them, but he doesn't move.

There is still 20 meters between them, not a distance one could just cross in a single jump.

Even so, seeing the prey Alva not showing any signs of running, they thought he couldn't move due to fear and so increased their speed.

Alva, as usual, didn't move, not even a bit, just like sculpture.

And just like that, the moment them Wolves entered the jumping range area,

SFX: HhYyUuBbOo!

The fired off—-fireball magic hit one of the wolf……and blasted away the whole skull of the wolf starting from the upper jaw to the crown of head.

The lower jaw which lost its support and joints just kept on hanging languidly like a splatter.

The comrade, who was by its side, had its over-all length shrank in a second, it got scared, and the other wolf stiffened and stopped moving.

Immediately after, Alva, still as usual, soared the sky without making flapping sounds, and this time fired ice pillars counting more than the numbers of fingers on both hands.

The other one, though didn't get by all ice pillars, but some of them hit it, and this guy dead too.

Both were magic, I've got no recollection of teaching, yet I have seen them being used somewhere.

Both of us saw Alva with half interest and half astonishment.

It is a scene which I had seen quite a lot recently.

Frankly speaking, during our fight in『Crimson Forest』, Alva had been watching the whole fight from inside the carriage, saw the various sorts of magic used by Suura-san and others, and learned them on its own.

Seriously~ though I heard from Irene-san, turns out this guy is seriously out of the norm……!

Alva learns magic just by watching it, and based on circumstances he reproduces them to such an extent which could put the original version to shame.

Along with that, recently, I have been feeding it fine quality food with the meat from『Subspecies』as centre -seems like the more it eats the more powerful it becomes- and its magical power and normal power too are raised.

The magic which he fires now are completely better than me, or rather, near completely than the magic shot out by a common knight.

The variation also increased, at some point which I, as usual, didn't know about.

Variations like the『Fireball』just now, or the ice magic, whose name I don't know, and also the sand magic Zari used, along with the lightning magic which someone used at some point.

Moreover, currently it can also use the wind bullet or wind blade magic which the『Subspecies』used.

……Even so, isn't this guy just a week old, right?

Seeing my own pet doing things I cannot do with just wild instinct made me feel jealous, but it's from that sort of race and I didn't have talent in this area from before, like that I got over my jealousy in just ten seconds.
In that way, I have two rookies (?) with promising future as my disciples.

In the sparring with Elk from now on, I am thinking of making more of a real combat bit by bit. Coincidentally going on further with the magic training too.

At this rate, in near future, she would show results which would not only surprise herself but even me. No, the parts she already knows, from now on, may get an accelerated growth.

By the time her movements become more refined, and she becomes more adept at handling magic……or maybe near perfect, then maybe I can teach some of my original magic to her.

As for Alva, I just need good food to feed him……the rest of improvement; can't he do it on its own?

The only thing I can do for it are, to take it out for stroll in different places and showing it different types of magic. Either way, I cannot teach it the magic which could be fired, in the first place me teaching Alva that would be like lecturing Buddha about enlightenment. Alva will learn on its own just by watching.

I heard this from Irene-san too that, in high ranking races like Alva's Nevalides, ones who inherit some amount of intellect and knowledge from the parents are common.

Alva is an exception even among them, that's why it has got good brains. It knows the way to use magic from the start, and even knows that food with magical power stuffed inside is needed for growth.

Alva already knew the way to fly in sky, and how to fly without making sound, moreover it mastered it after just a little bit of training.

And more than anything, whilst being just a week old, he already understood us humans' language, due to which he would listen to order and do it perfectly.

This is somewhat ominous, but still I can't wait to see its growth too. Based on circumstances, it might fill up my weakness, the use of magic.

Well, I did thought that he is not just any soothing pet.

At any rate, let it be Elk or Alva, the fact I'm raising such great talented people (talented bird) is more than enough to make me happy. I now understand why cultivation games of this theme were fad for some time.

「Well Alva is also improving little-by-little, shan't we too continue?」

「……Indeed」

☆☆☆

20 minutes later,

After finishing the first phase of the sparring, which had been growing longer per time, both of us were taking a rest after dealing with the sweat. Alva was perching on my shoulder, as if it had been waiting for this. Oh this cute little bastard.

Currently, eating, the mood is of picnic. We thought that we should eat outside too once in a while, so the packed lunch we brought, meat of『Subspecies』was being ate by him,

Just, this meat of『Subspecies』……well, the stock might be running low.

Even the appetite of the growing Alva is a great deal, but though I dry the food, it

still gets spoiled easily, depending on the parts, there were also those which couldn't be eaten due to their state.

That's why, at this pace it would last till three or four days.

「Elk, according to Suura-san……Exceed Hoppers should be present on the other side of Ritoras Mountain, right?」

「Yep. After that I tried searching more info about it and found that they live in a place called『Green Canyon』, a ravine present on the other side of mountain……eh, don't tell me you want to go there?」

「……Alva's food is about to finish, so I was thinking of taking a jogging around there, and just by chance hunting new food」

「……That's impossible for you. Keeping your strength aside, with your poor sense of direction, even having a map with you……, you would surely be lost in the Ritoras Mountain before you even reach the place」

「……Can't you accompany me?」

「Sorry, that's just too much. That place is a leading danger area around this city; even the demons appearing there are high-ranked……I just can't get close to there. Even with you, it's going to be dangerous」

「I see……」

Well, can't be helped. As for me, I think demons of that rank wouldn't be much of trouble, but let alone returning back, me reaching there also seems an impossible wish.

Of course, if Elk accompanied me, I will protect her with full power, but going through a danger area with that high of danger level is going to be hard, physically and mentally too. She hates it, so I can't forcibly ask her to accompany me to such an Danger Area.

Sigh, what shall I do?

No well……in the『forest』there are demons with magical power, like Red Lizard or Magic Bunny -It would still require Elk to guide me- , but it possible I want to feed Alva good stuff.

「So a good news for the current Minato-kun♪」

「Waaah!?」

And, due to the sudden voice of Zari, who appeared from behind by vanishing his presence, Elk jumped up. I, of course, knew about it, but still ignored, including the words he just said.

Alva also seemed to know about it, so reaction by it too.

Wait? This guy got a wide network of information, right? In that case, maybe he can tell me other demons with good amount of magical energy stuffed in them, just like that『Subspecies』.

So, attacking while the iron is hot, I asked Zari, and as he was eavesdropping from before, he knew about my situation.

「Didn't I just say, A GOOD NEWS. In truth, currently on the summit of Ritoras Mountain, some migratory birds' called『Canfolus』have come, oh and they have magical energy」

「Eh!? For Real!?」

「For real. Them rank are D. Well the amount of magical energy would lose to that『Subspecies』, but I have heard that the purity of magical energy is almost the same. Shouldn't you try at least once on them」

Whoah, this is damn great news! Even their levels, and the habitat, yeah, it's completely reasonable and convenient.

In the Ritoras Mountains, where demons are of low ranks, a group of Rank D demons came out, means the guild might have already warned to newbie to not go near the summit, however, to me and Alva that is a good news.

Taking a glance at Elk, she showed eyes as if wanting to say『Can't be helped』and nodded.

「Alva, the next food candidate is a bird, are you fine with cannibalism?」

—-*Piiiiiiii!* (Agreed)

Alrighty! Now that it's decided, we need to hunt before they are hunted! Hit while the iron is hot!!!

「Alrighty! Then Zari, thanks for the info there! I'm in a hurry, will give you the gratitude later」

「No problemo, before you go there is still one more message for you. The glassed receptionist told you to come for the update of card as your assessment is already done」

「Yeah, Roger」

Then, I will go there after hunting that『Canfolus』or whatever demon.

「Then, let's go now, Elk, Alva」

「Yes yes……please go slow, or I might throw up」

—-*PiiiiiIiIIIIi!*

I will take care of it!

☆☆☆

……By the way,

After hunting the Canfolus, which just happened to be many, so thinking about future I hunted around ten of then (will smoke 'em all), then returned to the guild.

Should I say expected, inside the guild, our guild card was updated under the stares of others.

With great frequency, I had defeated many demons, so compared to when『Naga』was defeated, my『assessment』took more time, and after some minutes, the result was engraved on our guild card.

Minato Quadrille
Rank: A

Elk Caucus
Rank: D

……Great, now I don't have to worry about it.